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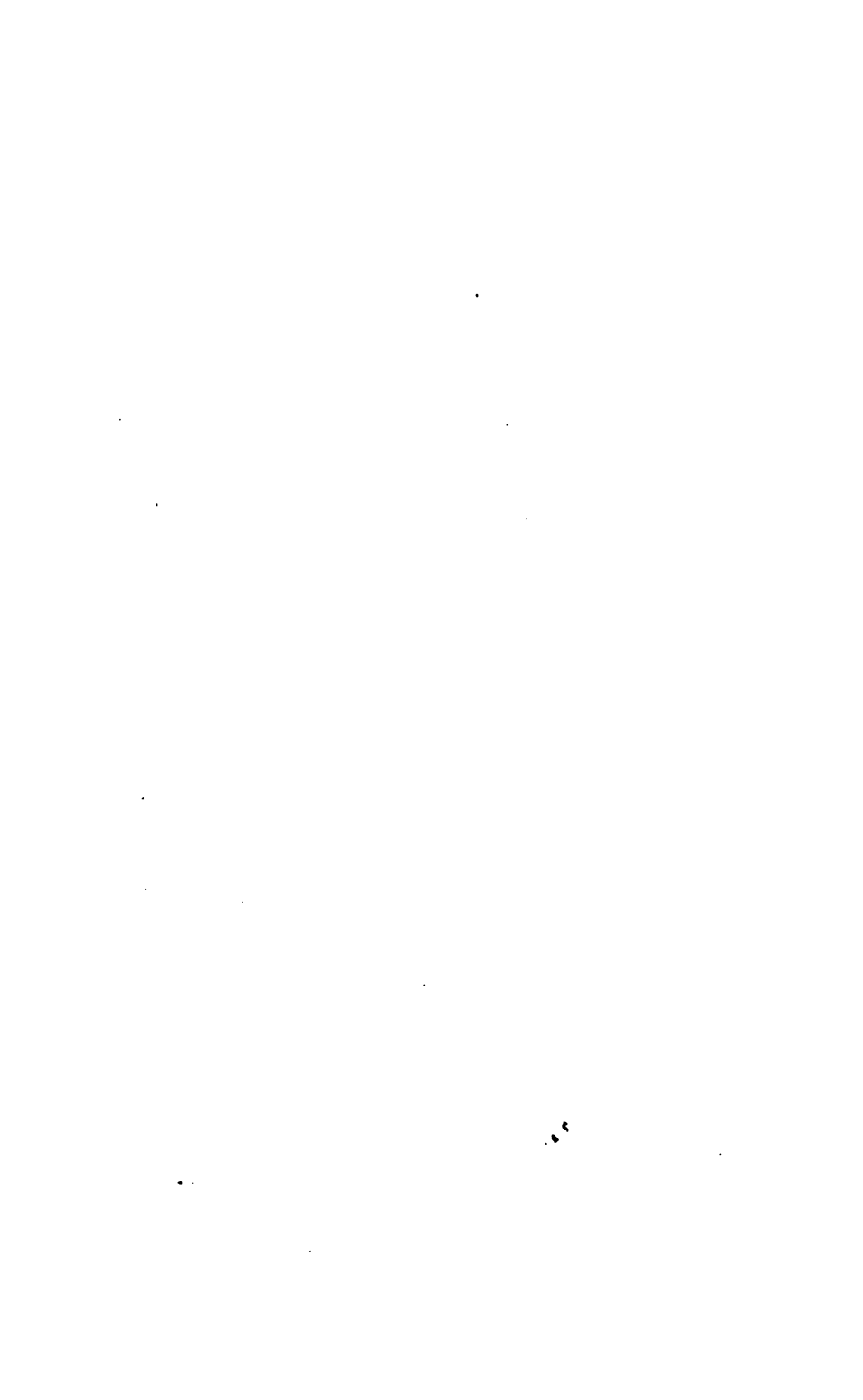
MIR JOHN





SIR JOHN.

VOL. I.



SIR JOHN.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“ANNE DYSART,”

&c., &c.

“Jetzt erkenn' ich was der Weise spricht,
‘Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen;
Dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist todt!’”

GOETHE'S *Faust*.

“Life, I repeat, is energy of love.”

WORDSWORTH'S *Excursion*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1879.

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251. f. 406

LONDON :
PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD,
BLENHEIM HOUSE.

SIR JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

MISS TOMMIE TAIT.

“**I** SEE no other way, Tommie. Blood is thicker than water.”

“Well, mother, what must be must be.” And having, in a slow, unwilling tone, delivered herself of this fateful axiom, almost Mahomedan in its sentiment, Miss Thomasina (Miss Tommie, or Miss Tammie Tait she was generally called) took up a stocking she was knitting, and knitted on in a determined manner. The question they had been dis-

cussing seemed to be settled, and just at the time no more was said.

The conversation, of which I have related the conclusion, took place a long time ago, some time before the close of the fourth decade of the present century, and many a spring has passed since the daisies first began to blossom over the graves of the two old ladies who then consulted together.

I have called them two old ladies, and yet they were mother and daughter. But Miss Tait looked almost as old as her mother, perhaps because in heart and mind she was really older. Mrs. Tait was a tall, erect, portly old lady, of commanding presence, fair-skinned, and soft-featured, with white eyebrows and thin white hair, the latter forming a row of little flat curls straight over her forehead, surmounted by a tall turban of white crape, which stood up about a foot high. A spotless white muslin

kerchief was crossed upon her bosom under her dress, but partly revealed by it. Her dress itself was black, gathered at the waist behind, and the long plain cassock-like breadth which formed the front, fastened by a button on the shoulder. A black ribbon round her waist, and an embroidered white muslin apron, with pockets, completed her dress. She always wore black, but, having been a widow for more than a quarter of a century, she had long left off weeds. She was netting now, with her foot in a stirrup, and, as all the world said, was a wonderful old lady for eighty years of age.

Her daughter was twenty years younger, but had it not been that her bodily activity, which had been always great, was quite unimpaired, whereas Mrs. Tait moved slowly and heavily, one would have taken her to be nearly as old. She, too, had been fair,

and even pretty, when she was young—indeed, she was fair still, but her skin was shrivelled, her nose thin, sharp, and pointed, her whole figure wiry and angular, and her dress yet more peculiar than that of her mother. The peculiarity of Mrs. Tait's was a becoming peculiarity; she never wore any other, and it seemed like part of herself, possessing the perennial suitableness and picturesqueness of a costume. Miss Tait, on the contrary, frequently changed hers; but, whatever she wore, she looked equally odd and old-fashioned. Those were the days of plain, full skirts and enormous sleeves, but Miss Tait's dresses were mostly tight and gored, and with short low bodices, as they were worn in the days of the first French Empire. She was not foolish enough—being, indeed, a person of most determined sense—to uncover her neck and arms at sixty years of age, and she usually

wore tight white sleeves, coming out from beneath the short ones belonging to her dress. A little shawl pinned to her person, and a cap fashioned out of all sorts of odds and ends of lace and net and ribbon, surmounting a snuff-coloured "front" of cork-screw curls, bound to her head by a piece of broad black velvet ribbon, completed her somewhat remarkable dress. Poor Miss Tommie Tait! since her father's death she had had a hard struggle with poverty. She could not pass the enemy by like her mother, with a certain placid dignity, but struggled with him, as it were, to the death. And now the fight was like to be harder than ever, with two penniless children to feed, clothe, and educate, in addition to their former expenses.

Miss Tait had continued knitting for some minutes without lifting her eyes (though she did not require sight for knitting), and with

her lips firmly set, when she once more looked up to say with decision and asperity, as if her mother had been offering some opposition,

“It is our duty, since their mother’s family will do nothing—more shame for them!”

“They were sore angert at the marriage, though a bonnier lad than our Jenny’s Harry is no to be seen in braid Scotland, or England either, for that matter, and as good blood in his veins as the best in the land. Woe’s me! woe’s me! to think of his young bones whitening below the saut waves till the sea shall give up its dead.”

“What is the use of going on like that, mother?” asked Miss Tait, sharply, yet secretly wiping away a tear from beneath her spectacles.

Miss Tait had at all times a strong objection to exhibiting emotion of any kind, and

was consequently apt to feel indignant at whatever proved her capable of such weakness.

“It seems hard to think they are a’ gone in their youth and strength—my bairn and my bairn’s bairn, and a feckless old wife like me left alone!”

“Alone! You have me, mother, and I hope I try to do my duty.”

“You do, Tommie, and I thank God for so good a daughter!”

“Well, then, mother?”

But the old lady had made an effort, and had resumed her cheerfulness, though she did not answer, and Miss Tommie naturally thought what she said was unanswerable.

It was a small, quaint, poor, but by no means ugly or vulgar room in which these two ladies were seated. For Mrs. Tait and her daughter, whatever might have been their poverty or their peculiarities, were

ladies born and bred, and knew and felt themselves to be such. The house in which they lived was the first of a row of four small houses which stood half way up a hill just a little outside of the town of Redshiels, in the border land, on the "Scottish side." Behind, this hill was clothed with trees; in front, little narrow precipitous gardens stretched down to the high-road, which led through the narrow dale, almost valley, in which Redshiels was situated. This road was divided from the rapid stream which rushed and brawled and tumbled at the foot of the opposite cliff, only by a flat, narrow strip of arable land, called haugh land. The cliff, called a "scaur" in the language of the locality, rose tall and precipitous, the deep crimson hue forming a contrast to delight an artist's eye, with the dark green foliage by which it was overhung, the birch and wych-elm growing in some places even

in the clefts or on the ledges of the rock.

Such was the view which met the eye of old Mrs. Tait as, sitting in the little front window, her netting fell on her lap, and she looked out thoughtfully, her heart full of the years which had passed since that view had become familiar, and of how they were all like a tale that was told. Miss Tommie sat in another window, one of the end windows (there was one in each corner), looking along the road towards "the town." It was her favourite seat, as that which looked to the country was her mother's.

In the middle of the floor of the room in which the two ladies sat—the "dron-room," as their servant Margaret styled it—was a square of faded Brussels carpet, having a grey ground ornamented with bunches of flowers of blue and red and yellow, not, perhaps, strictly botanical in their character. The walls of the room were painted a cold blue-

grey, with a deep wooden skirting-board of the same hue, picked out with white. A round mahogany table, with yellow lines and four thin unturned legs, stood between the two bow-windows, and was ornamented by a large Nankeen china punch-bowl, half full of pot pourri, sundry little china cups and saucers, and a curious old fan, spread out against the wall. A cane sofa and arm-chairs with dimity covered cushions and valances, were set round the walls, except where there stood an old-fashioned spinnet, and a mahogany spinning-wheel, on which, in her early youth, Mrs. Tait had spun many a pound of flax. Over the mantelshelf was a narrow, old-fashioned mirror, with a broad canopy at the top, and over the spinnet hung, in an oval ebony frame, a view of Holyrood Palace, worked at school by Miss Tommie, in black silk upon a white (now yellow) ground—her *magnum opus*.

A very old-fashioned drawing-room this was, even in those days ; but it was always tidy and bright, and always, as now, had an old china plate, shaped like a saucer, full of fresh flowers, standing on a little work-table, with a bag beneath of faded green silk ; this table generally stood near old Mrs. Tait, and to-day the flowers were roses, the old-fashioned roses which smell so sweet—cabbage, and moss, and blush, and York and Lancaster—for the sunny exposure of the steep sloping garden suited roses.

“The bit bairnies,” said the old lady, at last breaking the silence, “will be a great pleasure playing about, poor little fatherless, motherless things!”

“They will be a great responsibility, but I will not repine.”

So said Miss Tait ; but if, to do her justice, she uttered no word of repining, she

felt an inward bitterness which penetrated her whole being. Was it for this that she had saved and pinched and screwed, that when the evil days of old age came upon her she should be no better off than any foolish and improvident person who had "taken the good" of what she possessed.

But blood *was* thicker than water, and she could not let the orphan children of the nephew of whom she had been so proud be homeless when she had a home to offer. Still it was *very* hard; and though, no doubt, it was God's will, God's will was very mysterious.

Again she had recourse to fierce knitting, driving her knitting-needle into what she called her "sheath"—as Jael might have driven the nail into Sisera's head. Miss Tommie always knitted with a sheath—a tiny roller-shaped cushion pinned on to her waist by two little flaps, into which the

knitting-needle was stuck to steady it. Occasionally, when Mrs. Tait had mislaid her daughter's sheath—for her mother was very tiresome about mislaying things—Miss Tommie would use, as a substitute, a bunch of crow quills, tied tightly together by means of a fine string wound round for several inches.

Silence ensued again after this last fruitless attempt of the elder lady to turn to the bright side of what her daughter felt to be only an unmitigated evil—a “sore trial,” she called it. As she had said, she was resolved to bear it; but it almost seemed as if she resented any endeavour to lessen its weight, and thus to lessen the magnitude, she would not have called it the merit, of her endurance.

Thus old Mrs. Tait was left to her own reflections, which did not in the least resemble her daughter's. “Another, yet another

generation!" she thought. "My Jenny gone, her son gone, her bonnie Harry, and me left!" Then, after a little, "Poor bairns! I hope Tommie may not be cross."

CHAPTER II.

HARRY SETOUN, THE ELDER.

MRS. TAIT had been in her far-off youth one of the Raes, of Rae—Raes of that Ilk, they were called—an old Border family, whose property, once extensive, had long been gradually diminishing, and, in the generation previous to her own, had dwindled away to the possession of an old Peel tower and a few acres of barren moorland. Since that period these, too, had passed into the possession of a great nobleman, whom they had long annoyed by projecting into his property as a peninsula projects into the sea. The Raes themselves were now all

dead and gone except Mrs. Tait. Their very memory only survived in the name of the ruined, ivy-mantled tower, and in the recollection of a few—a very few—aged people. These would sometimes relate the story that had been told them in their youth, one among several that lingered, about the old time when so many belonging to the best blood on the Border had been “out” in the “forty-five.”

Rae of that Ilk, like most of his neighbours, was a devoted partisan of the young Chevalier, and, true type of his nation, was ready to make good his faith by his practice. But Mrs. Rae—“Leddy Rae,” as she was called by her peasant neighbours—was a type of her race too, but an altogether different type from her husband—a woman of shrewd sense and great determination, practical and long-headed, but without that fervour of romance or capacity for sacrifice

to an idea which is equally Scotch with the long-headedness. Willingly would Mrs. Rae have sacrificed herself for her husband or her children; but for the "Pretender," as she called him in her heart, the case was different. "Let sleeping dogs lie," was her somewhat Conservative motto, in spite of her Hanoverian proclivities. Her plan of action was made up, but she kept her own counsel—a proof, if any were needed, that a woman, or at least a Scotchwoman, can act and be silent.

Rae of that Ilk was dressed and ready, his white cockade on his cocked hat, his "braid"-sword beside it on the table, where his "four-hours,"* his last meal at home,

* Pronounced "fowr oors," and so called on account of being taken at four o'clock. In the end of last century it consisted of what we call "tea," including its accompaniments. It might stand for our present "afternoon tea." There is nothing new under the sun.

was waiting. He only required to be booted and spurred to be ready to ride away, under cover of "the gloaming," to join the camp of Prince Charles Edward. But lo! never was the old adage about the cup and the lip more strikingly illustrated. The "leddy" had stolen away for a moment, using her opportunity to pour a kettle full of boiling water into the "laird's" boots, a feat she had accomplished just as he came to put them on. Rae of that Ilk could not stand upright that night, or for many long nights to come. Tradition gives no details of the matrimonial scene which ensued, and which took place some years before old Mrs. Tait was born; but the laird and the ledly were never in after-days looked upon as an unhappy couple, and Mrs. Tait could remember having heard her mother say now and then on a rare occasion, "Ye may thank me, laird, that ye hae gotten yer heid

on yer shouthers ;" to which her father had seldom replied but by a faint grin or a shake of the head, which truly enough he owed to her.

Mrs. Tait had married a young officer, with whom she had gone to America, shortly after the War of Independence had broken out, and her husband had been slain at Bunker's Hill. The surgeon of the regiment, who attended the young widow through a long illness, became enamoured of his patient, and, after two years of widowhood, though still but twenty years of age, she was married a second time, and it was shortly after the birth of Miss Thomasina that Dr. Tait settled as a physician in Red-shiels. He was a clever man, and his reputation was extended, for benevolence as well as skill, far and wide on both sides of the borderland. He was a stately man, too, with his queue and his ruffled shirt, and the

coach and pair in which he was accustomed to visit his more distant patients. But coaches and pairs were not kept for nothing in those days, any more than they are in the present, and the doctor's practice, though large, was not always remunerative. Of course he only took fees, and, as he never asked for them, it is to be feared they were sometimes forgotten. It is, therefore, not surprising that, when he died, leaving his widow elderly, and his daughter middle-aged, there remained, after all debts were paid, but a slender pittance for their maintenance.

But, as the Redshiels public said, they bore their change of circumstances "beautifully." Mrs. Tait was the same calm, dignified woman she had always been, and Miss Tommie had her whole life been noted as a capital manager. Poor Miss Tommie! she had to manage now, indeed, for her mother,

as was well known, was no manager, and had long ago yielded up the rule to her more competent daughter. Miss Tommie liked managing, but she would have liked a little more to manage, and the difficulty of making ends meet, if not too much for her genius, was certainly too much, at times, for her temper. And now to think that she was to have two more mouths to feed, two more persons, small persons, certainly, but still two, to clothe, she who had not bought a dress for ten years! Miss Tommie had not, of course, been the only child of Dr. and Mrs. Tait. Besides two brothers, who had died in infancy, she had had a sister, the next in order in the family to herself.

Tommie and Jenny had both been pretty girls, Tommie tall and fair, like her mother, Jenny shorter, darker-eyed, livelier, more *espiègle*. She early married a young naval officer, who fell over head and ears in love

with her at a public ball in Edinburgh, and when he returned to sea, a commander, Jenny sought once more the shelter of her father's roof, and there died giving birth to a son. Not many years afterwards the young widower lost his life, like his Admiral, at the battle of Trafalgar, leaving his child as a legacy to the maternal grandparents.

The pet of the doctor's house was Harry Setoun. There was plenty of everything in those days, and his bright young presence did not imply pinching and screwing. The women—for Tommie was not so careworn and old-maidish at that time—doated on him, and to the old doctor it seemed as if one of the sons who had been lost in his early manhood, had been given back to him now in his old age. Nothing was to be spared upon Harry. He was sent to school, the high school in Edinburgh, and, as the boy seemed well endowed, the doctor

thought of entering him at Oxford. Then he should succeed him in his profession, take, if possible, even a higher place than he had done, and, as his birth entitled him to do, hold up his head with the best.

But, l'homme propose; Harry did not want to go to Oxford; he would not be a physician. He longed for change and adventure. He wanted to see the world. Life at Redshiels was far too narrow. He would be a soldier. His father had been a sailor, and, in a way, his grandfather himself had been a soldier. Both he and his grandmother had seen other lands, and Harry too longed to see other lands and other ways of life, and in those times there was no "Cook," and no "Gaze," no railways, no steamboats. It was altogether another world from ours. Human nature was no doubt the same, as Harry's wishes showed; but it existed under wholly different con-

ditions. His grandfather was disappointed, and his aunt was indignant. Only his grandmother felt with him, while she shed many a tear in private at the thought of parting with the blooming youth who was the apple of her eye, and with whom she had more in common than with any other member of her family. The boy, too, loved his grandmother with that touching love which chiefly shows itself in perfect trust. Harry Setoun as little doubted that God would continue to make the sun to shine as that "Grannie's" love would ever fail him either in sympathy or in action.

She had been his confidante from his babyhood, and it was through her he obtained at last his grandfather's consent to his wishes, and funds to purchase a commission in a line regiment. Full of life and hope, he left his home one fine May morning to join his regiment, which was under

orders to sail for Canada in the course of a few weeks. It was in those days a long journey to Portsmouth, where the regiment was then quartered. After a twenty or thirty miles of land journey, he had a sea voyage to London of a week or a fortnight, as the winds might prove favourable or otherwise. There was no coach or public conveyance except the mail-gig to the seaport from which Harry was to embark, so it was decided he should ride thither on one of the carriage-horses, the coachman to accompany him on the other.

How often had old Mrs. Tait lived over in memory that parting scene at the garden-gate leading to the tall house in Redshiels where she had passed the greater part of her life ! In her dreams, waking and sleeping, she often saw, as she had seen him then, Harry mounted and ready to ride away ; the heavy, frosty dew on the grass ; the

lilacs and laburnums mingling their gold and purple as they overhung the gate ; her husband, in his professional black knee-breeches, silk stockings, and cambric ruffles, pale but dignified, as he gave the boy his blessing with a voice which faltered in spite of himself ; Thomasina in the background, with her lips set together, and her eyes fixed on the ground. Then—and that recollection was unspeakably sweet to her yet—though the doctor had chidden the youth at the time, she remembered how Harry had jumped down again from his horse, thrown his arms once more round her neck, crying, “ Good-bye, dear grannie, good-bye ;” and, with his face turned away, had mounted again, and in a moment ridden off without looking back. She could remember, too, how she had gone to her own room and prayed that, if it were His will, God would spare her, old as she was, to see her darling

come home. He had spared her to a far longer life than she had ever expected or wished for ; but she had never seen Harry come home.

Harry's letters were like himself—full of life and hope and adventure—not long, but arriving punctually ; they were always addressed to his grandmother, and his descriptions of Canadian life, if brief, were graphic, and not without humour. Then the regiment was ordered home ; it was to be in garrison at Plymouth ; he should soon see them all again—a few of the senior officers were to have leave first, then Captain Harry Setoun would be home on furlough. He had been at Plymouth about two months when a letter arrived, which, instead of announcing, as they expected, the speedy appearance of the writer, astonished and vexed them all. Harry was married ! He had married Miss Lucy

Lavington, an orphan, and the niece of Sir John Lavington. They could not come to Scotland just then, for the lady's family were not pleased with the marriage, which, it afterwards came to light, had been clandestine.

“Not pleased with my Harry!” cried old Mrs. Tait. “Think it beneath them! Set them up! As if the blood of the Raes and the Setouns was not as gude as any in England, let alone Scotland!”

But the marriage was a trial to her too. Another had come between her and the child who had been all her own; he would have been with her now, had it not been for this girl whom he had never seen till yesterday, as it were.

But Mrs. Tait had too just a mind to encourage such a feeling. She answered his letter lovingly. The marriage was not very prudent perhaps, she said, but it did not

do for old folks to forget that young folks would be young folks. His Lucy should have a daughter's share in her heart, and she hoped she should live to see their mutual happiness. "But you must come soon, for I am nigh on three score and ten," she added. Mrs. Tait was rewarded by a letter from her grandson overflowing with love and gratitude.

"Grannie," said the writer, "was always good and kind, and Lucy was almost as anxious as himself to see her. But her family would do nothing for her, and they were too poor to undertake then so long and expensive a journey. He well knew since his grandfather's death that she and Aunt Tommie must be straitened enough. He had always hoped to help them, he hoped to do so still."

"Nonsense !" said Miss Tommie. "I wonder, mother, how you can have patience with such nonsense."

"I ken, Tommie, it is nonsense, but I like the lad all the better for no having a grey head on green shouthers. There is a time for a' things."

"Well, well! I wish he may na have married in haste to repent at leisure." But at the moment Miss Tommie hardly looked as if she really wished it.

Months passed by, during which Harry wrote as punctually as ever; then, after rather a longer silence than usual, came a letter to say he was exchanging into a regiment going to India. In this time of peace there was no chance of rising in his profession at home. In India he could do a great deal more for his wife and the babe yet unborn. Lucy would, of course, accompany him. For a moment it was like a death-blow stroke to Mrs. Tait.

"I shall never see him again, Tommie," she said, and sank back in her chair; her

daughter, for in all such matters Tommie was the most devoted of daughters, flew to her in alarm and put brandy to her lips ; but Mrs. Tait quickly revived, and Tommie heard her murmur,

“ I shall see him again, but not here.”

Harry had been many years in India, and several children had been born, but of these only the two eldest had survived. Three or four years before the opening of my narrative, these two had been brought over to England by their mother, who had settled herself at Bath, intending to return to India when her own health was re-established, and the children were old enough to be sent to school. When that time should come, Harry wrote, they should spend their holidays with grannie. If possible, he would come home himself to fetch his wife back to India, and there should be a joyful meeting of the whole family at Redshiels. Mrs.

Tait's eyes filled with happy tears when Tommie read aloud to her this letter.

"I shall not see it," she said, "but it is good of the lad to think of it. There is nae chance, Tammie, do ye think, of my living so lang?"

"I hope so, mother; ye are a wonderful woman."

A prayer of intense desire rose then from the heart of the old lady that God would permit her to see her darling before He took her to Himself. So little did she foresee how it was all to be.

A year before that fixed for Harry's probable return, word came that he had had a severe illness, but was better. The medical men were sending him home to recruit; he should be in England soon after his letter. The *Nizam*, in which his passage was taken, was to sail in less than a fortnight. It was a very brief letter, addressed to his wife,

and she sent it on to Mrs. Tait. The writing was shaky—evidently Harry was almost too ill to write—but his old sanguine spirit broke through the clouds which encompassed him.

“I shall be quite well as soon as I get to sea, and I am almost well with joy at the prospect of seeing you and the darlings so soon, as well as dearest old grannie. Let her know.”

Three weeks after the receipt of this letter, Miss Tommie was sitting in one of the end windows, looking towards “the town,” when she perceived the postman coming in the direction of the Brae, the name of the row of houses in which they lived. Now it was as yet the days of high postage, so that the postman’s visit was an important event, more especially to Miss Tommie and her mother—an event big, as it were, with the issues of Destiny. An exclamation was on

Miss Tommie's lips, when she noticed that her mother had fallen asleep over a book in her usual arm-chair in the front window. She slipped quietly out of the room and downstairs, and met the postman at the gate which shut in the path in front of the Brae houses from the public road. But the first sight of the letter made her hand tremble so that she could hardly get the money out of her purse, and caused her to forget which end (it was a long netted one) the silver was in. The letter was large and square, neatly folded, written on black-edged paper, with a black seal, and the address in a stranger's handwriting.

"It will kill my mother," was poor Miss Tommie's first thought, as she withdrew with it into the "parlour" downstairs to read it alone.

It was from a clergyman at Plymouth, and the contents outran Miss Tommie's

worst anticipations. The *Nizam* had come in two days before, this gentleman wrote, and Mrs. Harry Setoun, with her two children, had hastened down to the harbour to meet her husband ; but there was no smiling, handsome Harry on deck to welcome those whom every letter he wrote stated he so longed to see. In vain did poor Lucy look round the busy, bustling groups. There was no glad recognition for her. A terror worse than death, to which she dared give no distinct shape, seized upon her, and she would have fallen down, had it not been for her terrified children, whose cries brought a little crowd around them.

Restoratives were applied, but the poor lady did not revive at once.

“ What is the matter with your mamma, my dear ? ” said a benevolent-looking clergyman, who had come to meet his brother, addressing, as he spoke, the little girl who,

though she was the younger of the two children, seemed at the moment to have the most presence of mind.

"We came to meet papa, and we cannot see him, and I don't—I don't know;" and tears rushed to the eyes of the poor child, who had striven to answer "prettily," as her mamma had taught her, but now broke down, while her brother sobbed along with her.

"What is your papa's name, my dear?" asked the former speaker.

"Our papa is Major Henry Setoun," said the little boy, looking up with a certain pride.

A faint murmur ran round a few of the passengers who had joined the group surrounding Mrs. Setoun.

"It is poor Major Setoun's widow and children. Oh, why were they allowed to come on board!" And a lady, with tears

in her eyes, told the compassionate clergyman how, a week after they had left Calcutta, they had committed the remains of Henry Setoun to the waters of the Indian Ocean.

Mrs. Setoun and her children were tenderly and respectfully conveyed on shore ; but the first time she attempted to speak a stream of blood gushed from her mouth. Once before she had had a hemorrhage from the lungs. This time it was fatal.

Such was, in brief, the news contained in the letter which poor Miss Tommie read alone in the downstairs parlour. It was from the same clergyman who had spoken so kindly to little Jenny Setoun on board the *Nizam*. The little girl, he said, had given him her (Miss Tait's) address, and he had taken both the orphans home till he should hear from her. The personal effects of both parents were also in his keeping.

Mrs. Setoun, he found, had been living in lodgings.

At first, on reading this letter, Miss Tommie could think of nothing but the effect it might have on her mother. Even Harry's death seemed nothing in comparison. Strong-minded woman as she was, she could not break it to her, and hastily putting on her cottage-bonnet and a soft white shawl of Indian make (poor Harry's gift sent by his wife), she slipped down to the minister. That night the bitter news was made known to Mrs. Tait.

She bore it better than they expected, as she had borne many other griefs of the same nature during her long life; better, probably, than some of her earlier sorrows. The next day she was up and about her usual employments.

"If I don't bear up," she said, "it will kill me, and I must live as long as I can for

the bairns' sake. Oh, my Harry! I wonder if he kens—I wonder; but I canna have long to wonder now."

It seemed as if it were this which mainly comforted her.

It was found, on settling the affairs of Major Setoun, that, except the very small pension till they were grown up, there was nothing for the children. Now began a hard struggle for poor Miss Tommie. It was contrary to all her principles, and contrary also to her feelings—for Miss Tait had a heart, when it was not overlaid by the cares of life—to let her own flesh and blood want while she had a crust of bread or a drop of water to share with them. Yet, oh, how hard to think that the little savings, pinched and hoarded for her old age, when her mother and her mother's annuity were both gone, must all be dissipated on two spoilt, troublesome children,

for Miss Thomasina felt sure the children would be spoilt and troublesome, as she had felt sure from the first that their mother had been a "silly, useless thing."

Dr. Gordon, old Dr. Tait's successor as consulting physician in Redshiels, who had been called into counsel, suggested that it would be well to write in the first place to the family of Mrs. Harry Setoun. They were rich and might do something.

Possibly the death of the mother might have softened the hearts of her relatives. Even Miss Tait "could hardly stand" begging money for Harry's children from anyone, but hard necessity and Dr. Gordon prevailed upon her to allow him at last to write. The letter was written, but Miss Tait bitterly repented that she had given her consent. From Sir John Lavington, the uncle, and nearest living relative of poor Lucy, it elicited only a cold and formal

reply, pointing out that, as the marriage had been quite contrary to his wishes, he "did not see that the children of the late Major Setoun possessed any claim whatever upon him." There was nothing for it, Miss Tait felt, but to destroy the comfort of her home, and sacrifice such future as she possessed, by receiving them at Redshiels. Miss Thomasina Tait had never in her life shrunk from the endeavour, at least to perform any recognized duty, however disagreeable, and she would not shrink now.

CHAPTER III.

AN ARRIVAL.

TWENTY years had passed since Harry Setoun and his grandfather's servant had ridden off on the carriage horses, on that sweet spring morning when the dew had lain so frosty on the grass, and the lilacs had smelt so sweet.

Times were changed since then in more ways than one. There were no carriage horses for Harry Setoun's children; but there were public conveyances of various sorts, though railways were as yet in their infancy. The children had been sent from Plymouth to London by sea, and from

London to Berwick in the same way. Their voyage, however, was not performed as their father's had been, in a sailing vessel, with a problematical duration of a week or a fortnight. They arrived in a steamer, and were only between two and three days at sea.

The temporary protector whom they had found at Plymouth had sent them, under the care of a friend, to London, who saw them on board the Scotch "boat." He had written, evidently taking it for granted that Miss Tait would meet them, or send some one to meet them, at Berwick. But she, having reflected that such an expedition, in the cheapest way it could be performed, would cost a "pound note," decided not to go.

"But if ony ill should come to the bairnies, Tommie?" pleaded her mother.

"What ill *can* come to them, mother? And, at any rate," she added, severely, and

not without bitterness, "we must cut our coats according to the cloth, and I have *not* the means." Which was certainly true enough.

Eight o'clock on a cold evening, though it was in June, found Miss Tommie duly in waiting at the coach-offices close by the "Red Lion," in the High Street of Red-shiels. The sky was grey and chilly, a withering east wind was blowing, and just as Miss Tommie arrived at the coach-office a few drops of cold rain began to fall.

Miss Tait drew round her the soft white shawl which had been Harry's gift, and went inside the coach-office, a little place about six feet square, where she seated herself on a deal box, turned upside down—the only article in the place it was possible to sit on. As she sat, the cold drops came faster and faster. Had it not been for the intenser daylight, it would have been more like November than June.

The coach was very late to-night, and it was very cold and tiresome for poor Miss Tommie, sitting in that little draughty place, with no better substitute for a chair than an upturned deal box, and with nothing to do but to watch the minute hand of a dilapidated "eight-day clock," as it travelled over the face slowly and tediously from one five minutes to another, listening all the while for the sound of wheels which never came.

Not unnaturally each five minutes as it passed made Miss Tait crosser and crosser, and caused her to take more and more desponding views of the children, of their noisiness, unmanageableness, expense, and troublesomeness in general, till, over her melancholy forebodings of their naughtiness, she became prospectively indignant with a righteous indignation. Of their loneliness, and childishness, and helplessness, their long fatiguing journey, the

thoughts which, even at this moment, filled the mind of her mother her consciousness had scarcely a glimmer. Yet poor Miss Thomasina was really neither a bad nor a heartless woman, only her sympathies were very restricted, and the sordid cares of life left no room in her mind for tender ideas or expansive sympathies. A whole hour she had sat in that chilly den before her listening ears caught the wished-for sound of the coach lumbering slowly up the steep street upon the great stones, like the ends of gigantic eggs, with which it was paved.

At last she caught sight of the long looked-for vehicle, top-heavy with its load of hair-trunks, carpet-bags, and band-boxes, umbrella'd outside passengers, and the coachman in front with his many-caped drab great-coat. The whole turn out, three horses and all, looked as if it had come bodily through a river or a lake. Then

Miss Tait descended the four narrow steps which led from the "office" into the street.

"Have you got two children with you?" she said, addressing the dripping, red-faced coachman as he jumped down from the box.

"Yes, mem, inside; just landed off the sea, puir, wearit bit craters;" and the coach-door was opened, and two pale, bewildered-looking children, dressed in deep mourning and tipsy, as it were, with sleep, were handed out. Miss Tait neither kissed them nor shook hands with them; her thoughts were intent not on pleasing or comforting them, but on serving their interests—that is, looking after their luggage and arranging how it was to be conveyed to the Brae. As for themselves, they must walk. Omnibuses and cabs there were none in those days. A postchaise was out of the question, and so was "Davie Mickle's Noddy," the only one-horse carriage to be had in the place. As

it was summer-time, the children were unprovided with cloaks and umbrellas, and stood looking helpless, amazed, and forlorn, as if they had suddenly been cast on another planet.

"I can't walk," said the little boy, "I'm too tired, and Jenny is tired too."

"You must do as you are bid, my little man," said Miss Tait, severely, resolving, as she afterwards said to her mother, to show at once that she would be obeyed.

"But I am too tired—I am so tired, and so is Jenny; if aunt had come, she would not have let us walk."

"I am your aunt," said Miss Tait, curtly.

As she spoke, a look of blank dismay filled both the childish faces; but Harry looked as if he would have maintained his position had he not been so tired.

"Please, aunt," said Jenny, who had not yet spoken, "I will try to."

"I am glad to see you are not so ill-behaved as your brother. Come away, then."

"Please, aunt, don't be angry with Harry; he is not naughty, he is only——" but a feeling of suffocation at her chest prevented her finishing her sentence; her voice died away in a whisper, tears filled her great brown eyes and rolled down her pale cheeks.

"Crying, too! Fie, fie; it is naughty to cry!"

"Jenny's not naughty," said Harry, rousing himself out of a dose into which he had fallen, and speaking fiercely, "Jenny is very good!"

Miss Tait was about to retort, when her thoughts were turned in another direction. The coachman, having now unloaded, and most of the passengers having been dispersed, that functionary approached Miss Tait.

“As the rain is that heavy, and the bairns that sair wearit, I dinna mind for aince taking ye a’ up to the Brae in the coach.”

As he spoke, he opened the door, and very thankful, truth to tell, was Miss Tommie to get, together with the children, into the little confined vehicle, smelling strongly of the musty straw with which the bottom was strewed.

It drew up at the end gate, for there was only a footpath in front of the Brae houses. Old Mrs. Tait was at the door herself, presenting a tall and stately and somewhat foreign-looking aspect to the children.

“Go in, mother!” cried Miss Tommie, before her mother could speak. “You at the door in this damp!” But the children were now in the passage, and the old lady stooped down to kiss them, a welcome they

would probably have received more gratefully had it not been for their previous experience of Miss Tommie. As it was, they looked doubtfully up at the tall black satinette dress and high white-crape turban. But there was something benevolent in Mrs. Tait's face which children, those quickest of all physiognomists, could not fail to read, and Harry said again, not without a certain tone of defiance, meant for Miss Tait—

“I am so tired.”

“Are you, my bonnie lad? Then you shall gae to your bed,” and she showed him the way upstairs herself, followed by Miss Tommie, Jenny, and the servant, to a little place in the garret, lighted by a small skylight, and where it was only possible to stand up, even for Harry, directly in the centre.

"What a funny place!" he said.

"Beggars must not be choosers!" said Miss Tait, crossly.

"Beggars, Tommie! My Harry's bairns! What do you mean?" Miss Tommie did not reply, for, though she generally ruled her mother, she was always respectful to her. "Gae yer ways to bed, my bonnie man," continued Mrs. Tait, "and I will bring you some white wine whey to make ye sleep."

"White—wine—whey!" ejaculated Miss Tommie, with a stop between each word; "and where, mother, are ye to get the white wine?"

"The sherry that Mr. Macdougall sent."

"But that was for yourself, mother."

"And if I like to gi'e it to the puir bairns, is it no my ain?"

"Certainly, mother!" and Miss Tommie hastened away to conceal the tears of anger

and vexation which had forced themselves into her eyes.

Harry was just getting into bed when his grandmother arrived with the white wine whey.

"Is it medicine?—is it nasty?" he asked, doubtfully.

"No, my little man. It is good, good and sweet."

Harry drank it off, asking, "Have you got some for Jenny?" and, being answered in the affirmative, he laid his head on his pillow, and, while she looked at him, he fell fast asleep. A bonnie boy! with clustering curls of thick brown hair, a fair skin, open countenance, and fearless blue eyes.

"My Harry come again," thought the old lady, tenderly.

Jenny was in bed, in a little room, almost cupboard, immediately under Harry's, with her head under the bed-clothes. It was

some seconds before she could be prevailed upon to look up, and then she disclosed a countenance, pale, frightened, and tear-bedewed.

“I am so tired,” she said, “and I can’t help it. I don’t want to be naughty. Oh ! mamma ! mamma !” and a great wave of anguish seemed to sweep over the little heart.

“My lamb ! my lamb !” said the old lady, and the tender words brought hope to the spirit of the child, crushed beneath the load of its premature sorrow, and she ventured to look in the old lady’s face. The latter gently stroked her hair, saying, “I am your grandmother.”

The little girl sat up in bed, and threw her arms round her neck, and sobbed on her breast ; for Janet Setoun was at once sensitive and confiding.

"Call me grannie; your father used to call me grannie."

"Grannie—dear grannie!" and the child smiled through her tears as she spoke with an earnestness and passion beyond her age. But she could not drink the wine whey, in the beneficial qualities of which Mrs. Tait had a profound belief—at least, not at that moment.

"It would do you a deal o' good, my bonnie Jenny. I made it wi' my ain hands."

The child, young as she was, understood her grandmother's disappointment and kindness both.

"I will try," she said. "Oh, it is so good!"

"The little man told me to be sure to give you some."

"Harry? Where is Harry, grannie? Is —is anybody with him?"

Perfectly did Mrs. Tait understand the nature of the anxiety expressed by this question.

“Harry is sound asleep, as I hope you will sune be.”

Little Janet smiled again, and nestled more closely into the depths of her snowy pillow. The white wine whey had made her sleepy too. In a half-dream she was conscious of her grandmother's kiss on her forehead. A faint feeling of being comforted stole in upon a deep yet confused sense of grief and pain, then all was a blank. Janet Setoun slept the dreamless sleep of tired childhood.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW HOME.

IT was after seven o'clock, and Janet had slept for nearly eleven hours when she awoke the next morning. The sun was shining full into her "bed closet," as the tiny apartment was not unsuitably termed by the Tait establishment. The sunshine somehow cheered the little girl. She was easily cheered and easily depressed. She rose and looked out of the window. The rain of last night had passed away, and the cold north-east wind had given place to a pleasant breeze from the west.

It was a pretty scene which met the eye

of the little stranger, her window being exactly over the front window of the drawing-room, where Mrs. Tait always sat. Janet's window, indeed, being a story higher, 'commanded even a finer view. Half revealed, half hidden, lay the blue, waving line of the hills, the dark hollows showing more distinctly in the morning light, and the mist wreaths, as they curled upwards, taking on them here and there a golden hue. The trees overhanging the deep red scaurs looked so cool and dark, and the river flashed and sparkled as if wild with joy, its hoarser song mingling with the voices of the thrushes and the linnets as they sang to their nestlings in the neighbouring hedges. Janet opened her window to hear them better, and was met by a waft of sweetest scents from the roses and pinks in the garden, and the honeysuckle round the window. She had over-

looked the garden till this moment. It sloped to the morning sun, and lay full now in the dazzling brightness. In the centre grass plat a young servant was watering a few smaller articles of dress with a watering-pot. The bright drops sparkled on the snow-white kerchiefs and aprons. All round this central "green" grew the flowers and vegetables, somewhat heterogenously mingled together.

Janet stretched out her head, and from the height her eye could penetrate farther than it was possible in the room below, into the mystery of the winding valley. She could almost fancy she saw, where the trees grew more sparsely at the top of the scaur, something like a ruin, and beneath she could catch a glimpse of a white pebbly shore, just where the opposite banks forced the river into a sudden abrupt turn, so that no more could be seen. Oh, how Janet hoped

that some day she and Harry should be allowed to explore that valley! She should so like to know what there was to be seen beyond that turn which only permitted her to guess at its possibilities of beauty and enjoyment. Should they be allowed to go close to that sparkling water, or to play on that white beach? Janet could fancy so many things they could play at. And surely the woods overhanging those high red rocks must be full of primroses in the spring.

The soul of the child was touched with all the beauty and the brightness, and in the unconscious manner of childhood she began to feel that Redshiels was a nice place, that she loved dear old grannie, and was almost quite happy.

The "almost" related to Miss Tommie. Like a cloud, though no bigger than a man's hand, loomed the thought of that high-principled lady on the horizon of the child's

feelings. The idea seemed to have been, in some mysterious way, the harbinger of her actual presence, for at that very moment the door opened, and in walked Janet's formidable aunt, looking taller, thinner, more eccentric, and more determined than ever. This morning she wore an old yellow-flowered chintz dress, an "Indian chintz," she used sometimes to say, reverentially, much washed-out, and made like the dresses in the likenesses of the Princess Charlotte. Over the little twigs of her snuffy-brown "front," guiltless of being "false" hair, rested a snow-white cap, or mutch,* made of "mull" muslin, with a full border set up on an Italian iron, what "Marget," the servant, called the "tally."

"Standing at the open window in your night-gown! Oh, fie! fie!" Janet quickly shut it with eager, frightened, trembling

* German Mütze.

hands, and, propitiated by her ready obedience, her aunt added, more benignly, "I see you can be up in the morning early. That is a good girl."

'Early to bed, and early to rise,
Is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise.'

But that is beyond the comprehension of your years. Mind and do as you are bid, and leave thinking to me."

Janet flushed up at this speech. She had understood her aunt perfectly, and was deeply mortified, perhaps a little affronted, to find her understanding made of so small account; but, though words rose to her lips, she was too timid to give them utterance.

"Have you been taught to dress yourself? I'll warrant not. Most mothers spoil their children."

Janet struggled with all the strength of

her pride to keep down her tears at this thoughtless reference, and answered,

"I think I can dress myself, all but the hooks at the back of my frock."

"Well! I am glad you are not so useless as might have been expected," said Miss Tait, approvingly; but her approbation was nearly as wounding as her displeasure. "There is the door of mother's and my room, just opposite yours. Come in when you are ready, and I will hook your frock."

Janet had never entirely dressed herself before, but her pride, and her love of approbation, together with a natural ability for most things to which she gave her attention, enabled her to get through her toilet with success, and, when her dress was duly fastened, she asked where Harry was, and if she might go to him.

She found him fast asleep in a little bed, pushed against the sloping roof of his sleep-

ing cupboard, with two little posts in front, a pair of scanty check curtains drawn close, as was the fashion of those days, when warmth, and not air, was supposed to be the grand sanitary requisite. He opened his sleepy eyes, and smiled when he saw Janet.

"Is *she* there?" he asked, in a raised whisper.

"No. And, oh! Harry, this is such a nice place—heaps of flowers and birds, and a river, and lots of white stones not very far off, and woods, and a garden to play in. I can see it all from my window, and so could you from yours, if only it was not in the ceiling."

"But I could see it from mine, too, if I was to push out my head." And, suiting the action to the word, Harry, now wide awake, and excited by his sister's report of the unknown land, jumped out of bed, energetically banged the window back against the

slates, and thrust forth his curly, bright, blue-eyed head. But he could see nothing but the sky and the tops of the hills; and he felt it would be better to make haste and reconnoitre the promised land from a more favourable point of observation. That, however, was more easy to wish than to accomplish. It was by no means so easy to get Harry's head in as it had been to get it out. Try which way he liked, it was impossible to get through at the same time his chin and his ears and his nose. It was in vain that he pinched, and squeezed, and beat them about; in vain that Janet sought to help. Her hands only helped to fill up the narrow space.

Terrified and nervous, she hardly knew what she was doing, while Harry, equally frightened, and more impetuous, began to stamp and scream in the passion of his fear and impatience.

“Oh, hush! Harry dear, do be quiet. They—*she* will hear you. Oh! do be still, Harry. If you would only be still, I think I could hold down your ears. And, oh! Harry, I will go for grannie, if you will only be quiet, and——”

But steps were already on the stairs, hurried, impatient steps, and, ere the children had time to think, the door burst open, and Miss Tommie, in a passion between fear and anger, followed by the servant in a panic, with eyes wildly staring, and her “mutch” falling off her head, rushed into the room, at least as far as its smallness, and the impossibility of standing upright in it, made it possible for anybody to rush in.

“What is the matter, ye naughty, wicked children?” cried Miss Tommie, the wrath predominating greatly over the fear, as she perceived that they were both alive, though she did not embrace, at the first mo-

ment, all the circumstances of the situation.

"Harry has put his head out of the window, and he can't make it come in again," sobbed little Jenny.

"And what business had he. I should like to know, to put his head out of the window, and his night-shirt on, too? He is a bad boy—the worst boy I ever saw in my life!"

Here Harry set up a most dreadful howl which brought one or two of the neighbours out of their houses, while the servant turned her head aside to hide the laugh she found it difficult to restrain.

"You may laugh, Marget," cried Miss Tommie, turning upon her viciously, "but it's no laughing matter. Come here directly and help."

Margaret, sobered somewhat, but unable to suppress a slight hysterical giggle, obeyed the summons, and, between the two, they

rescued poor Harry from his awkward position, but not without grazing one cheek and straining his neck so that it ached for a day or two. Then, to complete his misery, bodily and mental, his aunt gave him a furious box on each ear, and shook him till he shrieked with fury and pain. Meanwhile, Jenny stood by white and trembling, and suffering perhaps more than he did in a different way. Her great, wistful brown eyes began to fill slowly, her nostrils to dilate, and her lips to quiver. Suddenly Miss Tommie quitted Harry and turned upon her.

“Crying too! I thought you were a better child. Fie! fie! take care I don’t give ye something to cry for.”

“If you touch Jenny,” cried Harry, breathing fire and flames, and with the snort, as it were, of a young war-horse, “I will kill you—I will ——”

Miss Tommie was turning round almost beside herself at this further outbreak of rebellious spirit, when all at once the tall, calm figure of the old lady appeared through the open doorway on the narrow landing.

“Tommie!” she said, as she beheld her daughter’s hand uplifted to strike.

It dropped instantly; but all the more her pale face reddened, and her light eye flashed.

“Tommie!” again said her mother, “think of the poor fatherless and motherless bairns —Harry’s bairns.”

Again Tommie’s face reddened, probably with a mixture of anger and shame.

“Spare the rod and spoil the child, mother,” she replied; “and worse behaved, more spoilt children I never saw.”

As she spoke, Harry looked up again, red as a turkey-cock, and with something of the expression of that pugnacious bird, while

Jenny in the background still wept slow but bitter tears out of her young heart, so ardent, yet so timid. For Jenny had made so many resolutions to be the best and most obedient of children, and was at all times so eager to please, and so anxious to be loved.

"They dinna understand our ways yet, Tommie. It is a' strange. I ken Harry means to be a good boy, and do as he is bid."

"I will do what *you* bid me, grannie," and the boy, still in his night-shirt, suddenly placed himself by her side, sheltering himself, as it were, behind the black satinette dress, and stealing a furtive, turkey-cock glance at Miss Tommie; then adding, defiantly, "Jenny is *very* good; Jenny is never naughty."

"She is the best behaved, certainly, of the two," said Miss Tommie, somewhat

subdued, but still very severely. "Mother, you are enough to spoil every bairn on Yule Water."

"I brought *you* up, Tommie," said her mother, with her usual calmness—a calmness which never seemed the result of indifference, and rarely failed to command both respect and affection. "And now, my bonnie Harry, you maun dress as quick as you can, and after breakfast you shall go with Margaret to the channel, where you can play, if you will promise not to get into the water."

"It would set Harry better to learn a page of dictionary spelling as a punishment, but, as grannie has said he is to go to the channel, he shall go, if he does not misbehave any more."

When the children came down to the parlour on the ground-floor, a clean but shabby little place, furnished with an old-

fashioned book-case with glass doors, a pembroke table, and a few chairs covered with horse-hair, they found waiting for each a "luggie" of porridge and a mug of skimmed milk. Mrs. Tait and her daughter were having at the same table tea and bread and butter.

"What sort of stuff is this?" cried Harry.

"Eat what is set before you, and ask no questions," said Miss Tommie.

"It seems very nice," said Jenny, in her eagerness to propitiate, scarcely keeping to the truth.

When she tried to eat, it did not suit her southern palate, and her heart rose against it; but she choked down a few mouthfuls with much pain and difficulty, feeling that Aunt Tommie's severe eyes were upon her. Harry fared better; the porridge suited his taste, and he had soon finished the contents of his luggie, and, with the permission of

Miss Tait, who did not like to see anything wasted, finished also what Jenny had left. Harry felt much better and happier after breakfast. He hated Miss Tommie, but he felt as if, in spite of her, somehow life might yet have comforts and pleasures—possibilities which, before breakfast, he had almost despaired of. After breakfast, little Janet was surprised to see her aunt begin to wash up the tea-things.

“Do you do that yourself, aunt?” she asked, timidly.

“I am *obliged* to do so. Once it was different, but I have not servants now, with children to look after, too.”

“Because I thought,” in a deprecating manner, “I might perhaps help you a little.”

“Help me!—smash all the cups to bits! No, thank you; it would be hinder more than help, I am thinking.”

Poor little Janet retreated, mortified and abashed. It seemed impossible to propitiate this "cross" aunt. In the meantime, Harry said, with a very red face,

"Jenny always washed our little tea-set, and put them away in the box herself, and she never broke one—*not one*."

"Children should not speak till they are spoken to," said Miss Tait, crossly.

"Whishtie! whisht-t!" said the old lady. "I warrant the bairns would like to go down to the channel with Marget. I see her with the clothes-basket ready on the barrow."

"They're sure to wet their feet," said Miss Tommie; "but they'll be well out of the way, if Marget does not mind."

"Marget" did not mind in the least, but, to judge by the broad smile on her good-natured face, seemed glad of the children's company. Margaret was a rather short,

stumpy girl, about nineteen years of age, clothed at this moment in a blue linsey petticoat and a pink and white gingham short gown, tied round her waist with a check apron. She had a fair, broad, "sonsy" face, very fair hair, partly concealed by a full-bordered "mutch," and was considered by the youth of her own class "a very bonnie lass"—the "lassie wi' the lint-white locks" being, at least at that period, the accepted type of beauty among the Scottish peasantry.

"And now, bairns," she said, "ye maunna mind yer auntie. Her bark is waur than her bite, and the mistress—that is yer gran-nie, ye ken—is aye that canny."

It was a beautiful summer morning, and not too hot yet, for the hour was early. The dew lay on the green corn, on the tangling vetches in the hedges, and on the cool long grass by the roadside. The Yule

sparkled and flashed and sang over its rocks beneath the red scaurs and the shady trees. As the children followed Marget and the clothes-basket down the white road which led to Fairyland (it seemed to them), their sorrows, at least for the moment, were forgotten.

The "channel" proved to be a stony, beachy tract, about the size of a small field, close by the river, and where, in its somewhat shifting course, it had no doubt once run. It was now used by the good folks of Redshiels as a place for bleaching clothes. Marget spread out her sheets on the white shining beach, fastening them with a stone at each corner; then, slipping off her shoes (she had no stockings), she waded into the stream, filled a watering-pot, and watered them all over, as if they had been beds of flowers, till they shone and sparkled in the sunshine with a whiteness that was absolutely dazzling.

The children were in ecstasies, as happy as if no Aunt Tommie had existed. Harry helped Marget to water, even filled the watering-pot by-standing on a stone about half a yard from the brink of the river, and dipping it in where it was deep. Aunt Tommie's prophecy, to be sure, was fulfilled, as, the stone being round and slippery, he lost his balance and slipped in with one foot—"slumpit," as Marget called it. But the good-natured girl took off his shoe and stocking, and laid them out on the channel to dry, then advised him to take off the others and wade, a piece of advice he was only too happy to adopt. During a brief interval in her bleaching duties, she showed them a hundred yards or so further up the valley, where a little stream—"burn," Marget called it—gurgled and sparkled over the stones into the river. It was too broad to step over, and Harry proposed making a

bridge of stones, and then Marget showed them how to make a "cairn" projecting into a safe part of the Yule itself, and more than an hour was spent over this amateur engineering.

Jenny, meantime, had got a further glimpse into the mysteries of the Yule valley. The high, red scaurs, made so dark by the trees, remnants of an ancient forest, sank down into gentle, grassy undulations, on which lay broken lights and dewy morning shadows, and only here and there a tree. Sometimes it was a hoary, knotted oak, with a broad shadow all round, but more frequently a sparse group of birches, their long green tresses waving now and then as the breeze sprang up, and their slender trunks showing like wands of silver.

"It looks so nice up there, Margaret," said Jenny; "I should like to go up there. May I go some day, do you think?"

"Ou aye, some day, gin there's time ; it's verra bonny there, and fine for playing tigg amang the birks on the fairy knowes."

"Fairy! Why is it called fairy?"

"Because the gude folks dance i' the munelicht."

"Good folks."

"Aye, the fairies," under her breath ;
"they dinna like to be ower muckle named."

"But there are not really any fairies?"

"I dinna ken. Ye can see the rings on the grass yersel' where they dance."

Janet opened her eyes wide. She was deeply interested. To have to bear with Aunt Tommie even, seemed hardly too much to pay for having come actually into fairy-land. She was eager to question Marget, but that damsel all at once woke up to a sense of neglected duty—the lateness of the hour, and a dread of Miss Tait's scolding.

Not a word more would she say, but briskly took up her watering-pot and bade the children mind their play. But Jenny, at least, did not care to play any longer. She was a little tired, and sat down where the grass haugh and the channel met, to weave a daisy-chain, looking up every now and then from her employment, over to the silver birches and the enchanted green swards where the fairies danced on the moonlight nights. · Could there really be fairies?

CHAPTER V.

EDUCATION AT THE BRAE.

THUS early, during her sojourn at Redshields, Janet had discovered that life was likely to be a chequered scene of pains and pleasures, as it mostly is in the world, but that Janet was too young to know from experience. She was too young, too, as may be well supposed, to reason from the particular fact to the general rule.

Miss Tait was not quite so cross at dinner, which meal took place at one o'clock. After dinner she shut up Harry in his bed-room to learn a column of spelling from a pronouncing dictionary, and the sixth line of the

multiplication table ; then taking a piece of muslin which, to Jenny's horrified vision, looked about as long as the garden, she measured off two yards, stuck in a pin as a mark, and bade her hem it, as her "task" for the afternoon.

"As you have been, on the whole, a good girl, you may sit beside grandmother in the drawing-room while you are at your work. I am going to set up the frills on the Italian iron."

"May not I sit beside Harry? He will never learn his lessons without me. I always help him."

Miss Tait laughed—a laugh the sound of which wounded and affronted poor Janet.

"I am thinking the white seam," so Miss Tait called plain work, "and the lessons will get on quite as well away from one another. Go away, Harry. Now, mind, not a mistake. I begin as I mean to go on."

Behold Janet then, seated in the little drawing-room described at the beginning of my story, upon a high footstool, the summer sun shining in, baking and breathless, even through the white blinds let down over the two end windows, Mrs. Tait at her usual place in the front one, which was open, and beginning to be in the shade, for there was not a breath of air stirring. Janet was very tired with her morning in the open air, and the long travelling of the last week, and not at all inclined for an employment she at all times detested, and more especially on hot days. Then, as she looked up, she saw that her grandmother's netting had fallen on her lap, and that she was asleep. Janet was not without fortitude; she threaded her needle and made a brave effort, but it was so hot, and so still, and the task seemed so endlessly long, and she was so tired, and a great blue-bottle fly

"buzzed i' the pane" with so worrying a monotony that her young, impatient spirit fairly gave way, and she wept and sobbed hysterically.

"What ails ye, Jenny, my bonnie!" said her grandmother, waking up, at last.

"Oh, grannie, I am so tired, and so hot, and the needle is so stiff and won't come through, and I have bled all my work."

"Come here, my lamb, and set your stool by me, and we'll see, we'll see."

Janet brought her stool close to her grandmother, and laid her head on her knee, and the old lady kissed her forehead, and stroked her hair, and the cooler air, sweet with the pinks and roses, fanned her flushed cheeks, and the sobbing ceased, and at last the tears. Mrs. Tait put the needle several times through a crimson velvet knob sticking out of an unusually magnificent snail-shell, and said,

“Now, now, you will get on faster, and while you are sewing you can tell me all about your walk in the morning, and what you did down at the waterside.”

Thus encouraged, Janet prattled away and recovered her spirits, and the hemming went better, and she asked about the fairies. Her grandmother smiled and told her tales about them, and other old legends, and repeated fragments of old ballads. It was a great treat to the old lady as well as to the child, for Miss Tommie cared for none of these things—“idle trash” they were to her. Then Mrs. Tait and Jenny mutually discovered that they were fond of reading, by which they both meant, fond of stories and poetry.

Mrs. Tait said,

“You have not read ony o’ Sir Walter’s yet; have you? No, you are ower young.”

“Sir Walter?” asked Jenny.

“Sir Walter Scott.”

“No, but I should like to, oh, so much !”

“Be quick then with the shewin’, and before tea you shall read me a bit of ‘Marmion.’ Aunt Tommie doesna care for poetry.”

With “Marmion” in prospect, it was astonishing how fast Jenny got on. Her courage rose, hope of something pleasant seemed to have infused fresh vigour into her blood, almost cooled her fingers. While she worked her grandmother said,

“But though Aunt Tommie doesna like poetry, Jenny, she is a verra gude person. Jenny, you are but a young thing, but I think you could understand. If it werena for Aunt Tommie, I canna tell where we should all be ! She works and manages for us a’. Mind that, Jenny, if she is a wee cross, she lives for us, and no for hersel’. Honey, ye maun be patient.”

And Jenny made a vow in her heart that she would be patient, for her grandmother's sake, whom she loved better and better. To bear something, or to do something, that she might be loved and praised by somebody, was very much Jenny's notion of happiness, more especially if fairy legends and poetry were permitted a place in the scheme of her life. Now the task was done, and the long frill neatly folded up, and the old lady brought down from a scanty bookshelf a brown octavo volume, bound in calf, and Jenny, in a sort of heaven, was soon reading how

“Day set on Norham's castled steep.”

A generation has gone by since that sleepy summer afternoon. Janet Setoun is advanced in the autumn of life, and her home is far away from Redshiels. But as, with the tale-teller's privilege, I see her now, on her own peculiar writing-table lies that yet cherished

volume. The calf boards are rubbed and shabby, the paper is yellow, and the ink in which her own name is written in it by her grandmother is faded ; but Janet loves that old "Marmion" as she loves no other book. The mere sight of it is like a whole picture-gallery, bringing a sweet sadness to her heart, and a dimness to her eyes, as she thinks of the "days that are no more."

Janet would have been perfectly happy reading "Marmion," had it not been for an under-current of uneasiness about poor Harry in his garret. For her own part, Janet, of the two, would much rather have learnt dictionary and multiplication than have hemmed frills, but Harry, she knew, frankly hated learning anything, that is, anything out of a book. She only hoped he had learnt them and fallen asleep. If he had not, what would Aunt Tommie say ? But the anxiety was in abeyance, as it were,

to the pleasure, till all at once a dreadful noise broke out overhead, a stamping, and struggling, and scolding, and the latent dread all at once became a fearful reality.

The old lady lay back in her chair worried and weary, and Janet started up, trembling with fear and excitement.

“Don’t anger Aunt Tommie, dear. Mind, Jenny, I lippen on you.” And the little girl, turning back for an instant with a kiss which was a promise, hastened upstairs, her heart swelling with pride at the trust that was reposed in her, even while it quailed with terror at the scene which was awaiting her.

Harry—such was the state of matters—had fallen asleep before he had even so much as tried to learn his lessons, and, on his endeavouring to say by rote both the allotted tasks without any preparation, had signally failed. Then he told the truth,

which, in a fury, his aunt cried out she did not believe, and an altercation ensued, which had almost come to blows. As Jenny arrived upon the scene, Miss Tait was loudly declaring that she believed it was all obstinacy, and that he could say his lessons quite well if he liked, and suiting the action to the belief expressed, which increasing wrath was tending every minute to confirm, she was pushing him back into his garret without either of the books, till "he would promise to be good, and say his lessons without a mistake."

"I can't, I tell you, and I wouldn't now if I could, and I hate you!" cried Harry, kicking and infuriated, as she succeeded at last in pushing him into the little room, and locking the door upon him, while she ordered Janet downstairs.

A heart-breaking evening succeeded. No tea was sent up to Harry. Mrs. Tait was

quiet but sad, and her daughter was sulky. Janet was miserable about Harry, and felt as if she had been quite wicked to enjoy "Marmion" while he, like the knights and heroes of old, had been in "durance vile." But Margaret consoled her by telling her she had taken him some bread and butter; "but dinna tell Auntie Tommie," she whispered. "The mistress kens."

When Miss Tait's wrath had a little subsided, she wrapped herself in her white shawl to pay some visits to sundry friends in the town, that she might tell them her trials and obtain their sympathy. Indeed, the very telling of her grievances was, on the whole, more beneficial than the sympathy, which was not invariably given with great cordiality, as Miss Tait had a character for being "sharp-tempered."

Mrs. Tait had hoped that Tommie would leave the key in Harry's door, as she in-

tended to let him out as soon as her daughter was gone ; but the latter was too clever for her. She took it out of the lock and carried it off in her pocket. But Jenny seated herself outside the door, on the landing, while Harry was still tearing and tramping about like a caged lion.

“ Shall I teach you your lesson through the keyhole ? ” asked Jenny.

“ I have a mind never to say it, and to stop here till I die, then what will she say ? ” but, notwithstanding this fierce deliverance, Jenny’s ear discovered a slight yielding quaver in his voice.

“ I have got the dictionary and the multiplication table here. Which shall we begin with ? the multiplication ? ”

“ No, the dictionary is the difficultest.”

Thus, by the time Miss Tait came home, Harry had learned the lesson, and when she asked if he could say it, sulkily consented

to try, and repeated it with hardly a mistake.

“There now, you bad boy, did I not say it was all obstinacy ; and to tell a lie too.”

“I did not tell a lie,” said Harry, furiously. “I could not say it, and Jenny told it me through the keyhole, or I could never have said it. What is the use of telling the truth, if you won’t believe me? You try to make me tell lies, but I won’t, because I am a gentleman.”

“And, oh, dear Harry ! because it is wicked,” said Jenny.

Miss Tait was conquered, perhaps exhausted for the present, and though, of course, she never allowed she was wrong, it is just possible she felt it.

“Mother,” she said, after the children were in bed, “I have been down, speaking to Mr. Macdougall to take Harry for a

scholar. It will be ten shillings a quarter, but *I* can never teach him."

"And Jenny—shouldn't she be put to the Miss Carnegies?"

"Mother! Jenny can sew and read and count, and seems forward for twelve years old, a far superior child to her brother. What more can she want?"

"She has learnt some French and music, and she has nae money. Suppose she had to be a governess."

"A governess! Harry Setoun's daughter! No, no; better save the money to hinder her coming to that!"

By which it may be seen that Miss Tait was not insensible of the family honour, as she saw it, nor incapable of making sacrifices to principle. She had, too, a vision of her own old age and its possible loneliness. Might it not be better to have Jenny to nurse her and take care of her, even if she

had to maintain them both? Jenny would not marry. Who, indeed, was there to marry in Redshiels worthy to mate with a Setoun or a Tait? and it was not at all likely she would ever go anywhere else. Let them only get Harry off their hands, and it was a more comfortable view of the future than Miss Tait had taken since the coming of the children had been thought of. As there was nobody to marry in Redshiels, what possible use would there be in wasting money on learning accomplishments?

Miss Tait cast a look towards the oval-framed view of Holyrood hanging over the old spinnet, and felt that, though it was something to be proud of, yet to spend money which was to bring no substantial return, ought not, in their circumstances, to be thought of. Jenny, too, might not be so clever as herself. All the girls in Miss Tait's time had not done such creditable Holyroods.

How many learned French and music who never played a tune or opened a French book after they left school! She had heard of girls being married for their fine music; but such a result had hardly come within her own experience, and—no, no, it was not at all likely Jenny would marry. Miss Tait did not think her exactly an ugly girl, but she did not fancy she would ever be a “gentleman’s beauty,” and she seemed likely to turn out far too sensible and useful “to please the men.” For, though believing in accordance with the order of existing facts that men were the superiors of women, in the same sense that she acknowledged the royal supremacy for instance, Miss Tait always spoke and thought of men as if their unreasonableness and unaccountable want of taste constituted a part of that superiority.

CHAPTER VI.

A CONFLAGRATION.

HARRY went to school, and confessed privately to his sister that he “did not like it.” There was the baker’s son, and the stocking-weaver’s son, who was going into the Kirk, and the son of the man that drove the coach—“very few gentlemen’s sons,” said Harry. “Only the doctor’s two sons, and the minister’s nephew, and one or two more, I think. But the gentlemen pretend not to be gentlemen, and, Jenny, if you meet me in the street, you must not speak to me, for you are only a girl—a lassie, they call it here. But I

love you all the same, you know, Jenny."

By degrees Harry began to like his school better, and even to have some doubt himself as to the advantage of being a gentleman, while he had none whatever as to his own superiority as "a laddie" over Jenny, who was "only a lassie." "Dominie Macdougall" did not think Harry at all clever. His English lessons, and more especially his geography, were not so very bad, but to drive a syllable of Latin or Greek into his head he feared would be quite impossible, so Harry was set down as a dunce, and became, if he could only escape punishment, quite resigned to the reputation.

His sphere of honour, he felt, was not the school, but the playground. Cricket was unknown in Scotland in those days; but who could play football or quoits, or spin tops, like Harry? What boy of his age could throw a stone as he did when, in

the winter-time, the Yule was frozen hard enough for "curling"? With an unerring eye, a ready hand, a brave spirit, Harry was soon a hero among the boys at the grammar school of Redshiels.

"It's a pity he is so stupid," said Miss Tommie, who was nevertheless a little proud privately of Harry's prowess—a pride which she carefully concealed, lest it should make him conceited. But nobody but Miss Tommie ever thought of calling Harry stupid. Whatever might be his success or non-success with school-books, it was impossible to look at his bright face, at his blue eye, which no object seemed to escape, at his whole active, impressive presence, and endorse for a moment such an opinion. Harry was not stupid, but it was actualities, things which he could touch and handle, not abstract words or unclothed ideas, which interested him, and, alas! at Redshiels,

nor indeed hardly anywhere in those days, was there a *Real-Schule*, as the Germans call it—a “modern,” as the boys term it at Cheltenham College. An active, out-of-door life was the only life that commended itself to Harry’s tastes and affections. This life he led as fully as he was permitted.

Nor would it have been right to have called Harry matter-of-fact. He had his ambitions, and his dreams of the future, though in a vague, school-boy fashion—dreams which he did not doubt would somehow get themselves accomplished, and which for the most part consisted in a vision of travelling all over the world, doing wonderful things, of what exact nature he did not know, and coming home with a great deal of money, which he would spend in getting a carriage for old grannie, everything she wanted for Jenny, and for Miss

Tommie—well, then Aunt Tommie would be very sorry she had been so unkind to him. It was only in the moments when he was in a rage at her that he felt quite sure he would give her nothing at all. At other times he thought he would at any rate get her some new clothes—a nice merino dress for the winter, with a grey fur tippet, and a brown muslin with white pattern for the summer. He had heard Jenny say one day there was one in Dickson's window that would just suit Aunt Tommie. Harry and Jenny often talked over the singularity of their aunt's appearance, which rather vexed their childish minds. The minister's wife and the physician's wife, and even Miss Gray and Miss Curl—two intimate friends and cronies of Aunt Tommie—all dressed so nicely, and they were aware that the minister's nephew and the doctor's two sons made fun of her by a variety of names,

such as the "glass of fashion," "tattabogle," and so on.

So passed away the first summer, and one or two more that the little orphans spent at Redshiels. On the whole, notwithstanding the frequent scolding of Miss Tait, her quarrels with Harry, the coarse broth and the porridge which Jenny's heart "stood at," it had not been an unhappy time to Jenny. She had explored the valley for miles, seen the fairy rings, though not the fairies, and amassed an immense amount of folk-lore, besides having read "Marmion" till she knew it by rote, and the "Lady of the Lake" once,—aloud to her grandmother. The winters were not so pleasant. It was bitterly cold, and they sat in the gloomy parlour downstairs, where the fire was never allowed to blaze. Mrs. Tait would occasionally give it a furtive poke when Miss Tommie was not present,

then little Jenny would sit down in front of it, and try to warm her blue fingers. But, on the whole, during the winter, Jenny's happiest time was of an ironing evening in the kitchen, when she went down to be taught by Marget to get up fine things. The kitchen was quite the brightest place in the house, with its blazing fire, its clean sanded floor, and glittering tin dish-covers on the walls, and brass candlesticks on the high black chimney-piece.

But it was not only on account of its warmth and cheerfulness that Janet liked the kitchen. Marget was the daughter of a shepherd in ——dale, "amang the hills," and, like many of the Scottish peasantry—at least, in those days—her memory was a perfect treasure-house of old ballads, ghost stories, and histories of witches, and warlocks, and brownies, which she told with a half belief in them, thus adding greatly to

their impressiveness. Tales, too—old-world tales, relics of the northern, or even, perhaps, a more ancient mythology—she added to her local legends. Often in her later life those old tales, forgotten amid the more real and imperative interests of womanhood, would return partially to Janet's memory, and she would endeavour in vain to recall them more completely. A few she renewed her acquaintance with in collections, but it is to be feared that many of the others—treasures they would be now—are lost for ever.

A ballad, a favourite one of Marget's, called "Johnnie the little Scott," she could remember no more of than one line, and it was in vain that she tried to recall the details of a tale called "The Well of the World's End," which used to fascinate her childish imagination. But the fascination Marget's narratives, more especially the ghost

and witch divisions among them, exercised, was not always of a healthy nature. It would have been hard to say that little Jenny believed in ghosts and witches, but a nameless dread took possession of her. She had at times an awful sense of the nearness of an inimical spiritual world, and, after she was in bed at night and was left alone, an unconquerable horror would seize upon her, body and soul.

Dreadful as the dark nights were, the moonlight nights were worse. The pale, flickering lights, the dark shadows in the corners, which seemed to assume shapes so mysterious and awful, were more than she could bear, and she used to shut her eyes and bury her head beneath the bedclothes. Then the noises were so strange and alarming—unearthly creakings, low knockings within doors and outside, wild mutterings, and sobbings, and moanings, which might

be the wind, and yet might be something else to which she must give no name. Unfortunately spirit-rapping had not been—invented in those days—I say unfortunately, for since it was—shall we say discovered?—one has lost much of the awe and respect one used to feel for the old-fashioned, solemn, awful ghost, with its generally impressive errand from the unseen, and come to regard unclothed spirits as a rather skittish, inconsequential, not very “reverence-able” class of beings. But Janet Setoun had all the awe of the olden time, and all the terror of a highly imaginative, nervous temperament. Sometimes she thought she would listen to no more such stories, but the fascination they had for her was too great to be resisted, the more especially as Marget had no idea of the effect they produced, and was all unconscious of doing her anything but a kindness in relating them.

That effect was all the more unhealthy that she had no one to whom to impart Marget's narratives. Harry at once pronounced them to be a pack of trash. There were no such things as witches and ghosts, and he only cared to hear about what was true. The life fresh and breezy that Harry brought in with him from his school and out-of-doors world did his sister good, but it could not prevent the mischief altogether.

Often Jenny, who was always sent to bed at eight o'clock, was so filled with superstitious terror that she could not remain in the awful solitude of her own room, but would slip down the stairs till past the turning, just where she could see the light from the parlour-door, and hear occasionally the voices of Miss Tait and her mother. Frequently she would sit upon the stone stairs till she was nearly frozen. A chronic cold every winter was the natural consequence,

which, one unusually cold autumn, became a cough; she began to look pale and ill, and the state of her body re-acted upon her mind. Mrs. Tait at times feared Jenny was going to turn out delicate, but when she said so to her daughter, "Nonsense, mother," was Aunt Tommie's answer; "don't put such trash into the child's head; girls are apt enough to fancy they are ill."

But a change was approaching in the life of the orphans. One night Miss Tait sat mending a great hole in Harry's trousers, the great nineteenth century having as yet not elaborated the idea of knickerbockers. Now mending trousers cannot be a pleasant task to anybody, and to Miss Tait the irritation she felt on account of its intrinsic disagreeableness was much aggravated by the fact that Harry, as was natural, was, as she expressed it, "for ever" tearing his trousers. Sometimes they were torn so badly they

would not mend, or even patch, and that was pretty much the case on the present occasion. Miss Tait patched and darned, while Harry had been sent early to bed, that she might have time to get them ready by the morning to wear to school. Harry made a wry face when he saw them, as the patch in the knee was a different colour, and the darn on the seat had been accomplished with the coarsest of unbleached thread. Harry at first declared that the boys would laugh at him, and that he could not go to school.

“You must go to school,” said Miss Tait.

“I can’t and I won’t,” said Harry.

Then there was a dreadful battle, till Mrs. Tait interposed, while Janet stood by pale and trembling. At last it was arranged that Jenny was to do without the new frock which had been promised her for the winter (they had now been a year or two at Red-

shields), and Harry was to have a new pair of trousers for Sundays, and wear the former "Sunday" ones out at school. The new ones were to be made of the best corduroy, as Miss Tommie could not afford cloth.

Janet was too happy at such a compromise to regret her frock. These quarrels of her aunt and Harry were her misery by day, as her superstitious fears were her misery by night. Had it not been for these two terrible drawbacks, she would, she often thought, have been perfectly happy. The hemming, to be sure, which seemed endless, and only varied by making shirts for Harry, was another drawback ; but that was nothing—nothing in comparison with these greater miseries.

In the meantime the new trousers were made, and Jenny hoped there would be peace, at least for a time. Harry had worn

them one Sunday, the day after they came home, and the next day he went to school in the old ones, as had been agreed. But, alas! as fate would have it, when he was jumping over a wall that same afternoon, the old material gave way, and the new patch came out almost entirely. In his trouble, as in most of his troubles, he had recourse to Jenny. She promised to mend them in the morning, before he went to school. But Jenny was not much of a needle-woman, and, work as zealously as she could, she could not finish them before breakfast. It was agreed therefore that Harry must wear his new ones. The weather was not bright, and if he kept out of the way, Aunt Tommie might not notice.

It all seemed to succeed better than could have been expected. A dreadfully dark cloud overspread the whole sky just at dinner-time, so that it was difficult to tell

one thing from another, and it was the day when the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* came in for two hours, and Miss Tommie was eager to finish dinner to read it to her mother. Janet was confident that she had plenty of time next morning to finish her task, and she went to bed all unconscious that a crisis was at hand, not only in Harry's destiny but in her own.

Harry had not much furniture in his little "bed-closet" in the attic. There was only one chair, a wooden one—if chair it could be called, as the back was broken out, and a piece out of the seat just at the corner by the front leg. On that rather rickety article of luxury Harry had seated himself to take off his shoes, as the preliminary step in "going to bed." But as he rose again with the rash motion natural to the species—peculiarly natural to the individual—something, a broken nail in fact, caught

the unlucky best trousers, and, Harry felt, had made a rent.

Now Harry was a brave boy, but, as he thought of Aunt Tommie's, in this case, not unprovoked anger, consternation struck to his very soul, consternation which was somewhat lessened when, on drawing off the injured garment and inspecting it by the light of the small morsel of candle which Aunt Tommie allowed him to go to bed by, he perceived that it was not a large rent. It then suddenly struck him that he might mend it himself, and not a soul be a bit the wiser, not even Jenny.

He felt ashamed to tell even Jenny he had had another accident. He was strengthened in this idea by remembering he had in a drawer a needle and thread quite handy, which he had obtained from Jenny a day or two before. He soon found the needle and thread, and stitched up the hole so that, he

flattered himself, it would not be visible, even to the lynx eyes of Aunt Tommie. Poor Harry felt very sleepy as he was at this unaccustomed work, and very thankful when it was finished. There were no scissors to cut off the thread, which was thread, and not cotton, and he twitched it in vain. Then it struck him he could burn it through in the flame of the candle, which was sinking and flickering, and anon flaring up, as candles arrived at their latter end are prone to do. No sooner thought of than done! Then sleepy Harry tossed the trousers on the floor, blew out the flickering candle, and jumped into bed, thankful that the tiresome business was at an end, and fairly well satisfied with his own performance.

But, sleepy as he was, even Harry had not time to reach that dreamless unconsciousness which entirely closes the ordinary

avenues to our senses before he became aware, first of a smell like something burning, then of a very bright light in his eyes, which, in the first moment of semi-collected thought, he fancied must be his aunt come to reproach him with his delinquencies, which she had somehow discovered. But, as he recovered complete possession of his waking senses, he saw, sight of horror! that his trousers lay ablaze on the floor. Quick as thought, he jumped from his bed, gazing wildly round for a second, and then, as if suddenly inspired, he opened the window, threw them out, and went back to bed, wondering how he should excuse himself to his aunt; but being, just then, too sleepy to care for the matter so acutely as he might probably do in the morning.

But, alas! poor Harry's slumbers were destined again to interruption on this most unlucky night. He had fallen asleep on

that second attempt, when he was again awakened by what seemed a tremendous commotion, both inside and outside of the house, while a great light shone in by his skylight. Poor bewildered Harry sat up in bed. What could it all mean? He had not yet guessed the misfortune which had befallen when Janet, in her night-dress, burst into the room.

“Harry! Harry! get up quick. The house is on fire!”

Harry jumped out of bed quicker than before, for life is sweet even to a boy who has burnt his best trousers, and dreads the wrath of a justly enraged aunt. But—he stopped short for a moment. The whole horrible truth had flashed upon him in that instant of dismay.

The burning trousers had fallen upon the woodwork of Marget’s skylight, which, being old and well-seasoned, had instantly

caught fire, quickly communicating with other woodwork on the roof of the house, and finally with the frame of Harry's own window. But it was no time for speculation as to causes, or even for regrets. Nothing could then be thought of but action—action of the promptest nature. •

Miss Tait and Margaret, who had not begun to undress, were now rushing wildly upstairs, the former half distracted, and yet by no means losing her presence of mind.

“To my mother first, Marget!—get on her flannel dressing-gown, and take her into Mrs. Forsyth's! Quick, quick, Marget! and the bairns and the plate. Saw anybody ever—— Run, Jenny, run—carry as many of your clothes as ever you can! And where's Harry?—getting himself burnt in his bed, I'll be bound!”

“Here I am, Aunt Tommie!” cried Harry, perceiving that, as yet, the cause of

the conflagration had not even been guessed, as how should it have been? But conscience had made a coward of Harry, and he was quite submissive while Aunt Tommie swung him out of the way, bidding him get out of the house as the only thing *he* could do.

Harry hurried to obey, Marget "chucking" him an armful of miscellaneous articles to "save." Arrived outside, Harry could see the reflection of a long tongue of flame which rose from the roof of the house; down in Redshiels he could hear the fire-bell ringing; and up the steep white road which led from "the town" to "the Brae" he could see, in the broken moonlight of the cloudy October night, a great crowd advancing, and hear, above the confused murmur of footsteps and voices, the tramp of the horses and the clatter of the fire-engine as it hastened to the rescue. Now

nothing would have been more delightful to Harry than to "assist at a fire," had the fire originated in any other way than in his own carelessness. It would have been, in the language of boys of our own day, "the finest fun out." But on that night it was no fun to the terror-stricken, conscience-stricken Harry.

He tried to do what he could, to be useful in every possible way, and was scrupulously obedient. Even Aunt Tommie at last became aware what a "good boy" he was when she heard everybody round praising him.

The fire was soon got under, and, after all, very little damage was done "considering," as everybody said. Miss Tait was soon relieved, and at first was very thankful. She had been appalled by a vision of losing at once her home and her property, and being, as it were, face to face with

absolute ruin. But it was found that ten or fifteen pounds would cover her losses; old Mrs. Tait was nothing the worse "to speak of," only a cold in her head, and neither of the children had been burnt to death, as their aunt was sure they would be before "they were done with it."

All this, I have said, Miss Tait was very thankful for at first; but by degrees, and when the excitement of the relief had somewhat abated—that is, by the next evening—she felt how bitter it was, and how dreadful to lose even ten pounds. How was she ever to afford it?—and then the inconvenience! She had not even a bed for Harry. Margaret slept on a "shake-down" at the foot of her own bed, but Harry had been taken in at Dr. Gordon's, and had been lent a pair of trousers by him, for in some mysterious manner Harry's trousers had perished in the con-

flagration. Miss Tait was only prevented scolding him for his negligence by hearing from everybody what a brave, "fine lad" he was, and how well he had behaved, and how useful he had been.

CHAPTER VII.

CONFESSION.

IN the meantime, Harry's conscience was far from easy. Two days had passed since the fire, and, various as had been the speculations with regard to its cause, nobody had yet hit upon the real one. Some thought it must have been a spark from Mrs. Forsyth's chimney, some one thing, and some another; but Harry knew, and he was not happy. He only wished somebody would accuse him, and he would confess; but when nobody suspected him, and everybody was praising him, it was hard to come forward and criminate himself. At

last he made up his mind to consult Janet—to confess, at least, to her.

Poor Janet! as she listened, her pale thin face seemed to become paler and thinner, and her great dark eyes dilated with terror.

“Oh, Harry!” was all she could say, but the tone was sufficiently expressive.

“But what am I to do, Jenny?”

“You must tell,” she said, but her voice was low and awe-struck. Jenny felt herself that it would, on the whole, have been easier to make up his mind to march to the stake, like some of the martyrs she had been reading of in Foxe (one of the few books the Taites possessed) than to face the anger of Aunt Tommie. “Oh! Harry, how could you bear all your life to have the sin on your conscience?”

“It feels like telling a lie. Gentlemen never tell lies.”

"Dear grannie is so old, or it would be best to tell her."

"I shouldn't mind telling Aunt Tommie if she were only like grannie. Jenny, do you know I intend to go to sea? I can't stand it any longer. I hate 'Cæsar,' and the Latin verbs, and what is the use? I am going to sea."

"Oh! Harry, Harry, what shall I do if you go to sea?"

"I will come back again, and bring you work-boxes, and fans, and china bowls, and a gold chain."

"Oh, thank you, Harry; but I don't care for anything if you only come back safe; but think of the storms and the shipwrecks!"

But Harry refused to think of the storms and the shipwrecks, or, rather, he thought he should like them, as long as he was not absolutely drowned. At last it was agreed

that he should tell Dr. Gordon, the physician who had taken him in while the roof and his room were being repaired. That very evening he marched into the doctor's consulting-room, or study, as it was generally called, having first ascertained that he was alone. Now Dr. Gordon had succeeded Dr. Tait as consulting physician for all the country round, for people in those days could not run up to London as they can do now. But, fortunately, neither did all the talent go up to London.

Dr. Gordon was an Oxford man, having gone thither, like many other clever Scotchmen, as an exhibitioner from the University of Glasgow. He was an elderly man, always well and professionally dressed, with the orthodox white cravat and gold-headed cane, a little over-dignified and pompous withal, but still a gentleman, and with a kind heart.

"If you please, sir," said Harry, "I came to tell you it was I set fire to Aunt Tommie's house, but I did not do it on purpose."

Poor Harry had spoken boldly, but his face was as red as fire, and his heart throbbed so loudly he could hardly speak. Now he hung down his head. The doctor looked at him in amazement, then gravely asked an explanation. This Harry gave very succinctly. During his narrative, Harry stole many a glance at the doctor's face, but he could not read much there. The latter continued to maintain an attentive, judicial countenance, though a more experienced and less interested person than poor Harry might perhaps have perceived a slight occasional twitch at the corners of his mouth, or a certain brightening of his eyes as if he might have found something amusing in the affair which had been so serious, not only to Harry, but to the whole family

at the Brae. When Harry had concluded, and stood waiting like a criminal expecting his sentence, the doctor smiled, though still with dignity, and laid his hand benevolently on the boy's head.

“And what do you want me to do for you, my little man?”

“Please, sir, if you wouldn't mind telling Aunt Tommie, and please, sir, if you would let me stay here till I go to sea; I want to go *very* soon.”

“My honest, truthful little man, you shall stay here as long as you like, and I will certainly tell Aunt Tommie, but I would not go to sea merely because you have accidentally burnt your trousers; and——” here the doctor's dignity gave way and he laughed heartily, Harry regarding him with a puzzled expression, as if he were tempted to join in the laugh, but hardly knew whether he might venture or not. He took

care, however, to explain to Dr. Gordon that he did not want to go to sea merely on account of his trousers; it had long been the desire of his heart; he did not want to stop in Redshiels, he wanted to see other countries; he was fond of ships, he hated Latin, he was stupid at school, but he "shouldn't be stupid at sea—at least, he did not think so."

"Well, my lad," said the doctor, "take the winter to think of it, and if you are of the same mind in the spring, I think my brother, the captain, will take a youngster of my recommendation on board with him."

Harry's cheeks flushed, and his eyes brightened with delight; then his face fell a little.

"It is so long till the spring." For Harry felt that it would be too long to trespass on the hospitality of the doctor. Still he was

happy, and went to bed that night with a light heart. However angry Aunt Tommie might be, he had gained a friend and a protector. Harry had been very judicious in his selection of a mediator between himself and his aunt.

Although she always maintained they had no sense, Miss Tait had a great veneration (boys excepted) for the other sex in general, and for Dr. Gordon in particular. As she listened to him, her fair, withered complexion became a sort of fiery pink, her blue eyes had somewhat of the glitter of steel, as if they could cut, and her thin, sharp nose trembled nervously; but she durst not break into what Margaret called a "tantrum" in the doctor's presence.

She could not, however, refrain from ejaculating,

"Little limb of Satan, he is always after mischief!"

“Nay, nay, my good friend, the unpleasant gentleman that you mention is said to be the father of lies; but your nephew Harry is Truth itself.”

A faint, grim smile softened, for a moment, Miss Tommie's countenance at this compliment to Harry. Harry was her own flesh and blood, notwithstanding his sins, and that others, so important a person as Dr. Gordon, should think well of him was gratifying to the family pride, of which, like most Scotch people, she possessed no small share.

“It's so hard on me, you see, doctor,” she continued, in a tone which was semi-apologetic. “I strive and strive, and do all I can, and these bairns are a great burden, and I don't like that my dear old mother should want any comfort she's used to; and then when anything happens from sheer carelessness——”

Miss Tommie stopped, her heart swelling with a consciousness of her own griefs and merits, which no one else seemed to appreciate. Her grey eyes had a glitter again, but not of steel this time. But Miss Tommie was far too proud a woman to let the tear drop. Nobody ever had seen, nobody ever should see, her cry. The doctor did for a moment feel her lot to be hard—very hard. He said kindly,

“It will relieve you, then, to some extent, when Harry goes to sea.”

He then told her of the boy's wish, adding that he should live with him till the time came. He began to need a man's hand over him, Dr. Gordon said, astute enough to know that, great as might be Miss Tommie's poverty, her pride was greater, and that it would never do to propose taking Harry as a relief to her purse, however much she might feel it was such.

And when her mother made a moan that they all went away, and none ever came back, she cut her short.

“It’s a grand thing for Harry, mother. He would never have done anything at books.”

But Janet and the old lady felt with one another, and it drew them yet closer together.

“But we must not be down-hearted either, grannie,” said Jenny, “and spoil our last winter of Harry.”

And Jenny sewed diligently at Harry’s shirts, seated on a footstool by Mrs. Tait’s arm-chair in the chimney-corner of the parlour downstairs, the old lady’s seat in winter, as that by the drawing-room window was her seat in summer. Janet hated making shirts, yet for Harry’s sake she worked at them diligently, and even became interested in the proper arrangement and

due artistic finish of "seam and gusset and band." Was it not for Harry, and was not Harry going to sea?

CHAPTER VIII.

HARRY GOES TO SEA.

THE winter passed. Even to Harry it did not seem such an age as he had expected; and to Jenny time appeared to fly. The shirts were made, and Dr. Gordon's brother, the naval captain, had arrived. It was with a beating heart that Harry was presented to him, and, as for Jenny, her pulse went so quickly; and her agitation was altogether so great, that she could not even see. It was in Dr. Gordon's drawing-room—a room which looked out upon a blaze of flower-beds, intersected by gravel walks, tulips, ranunculus, and auriculas being then

the chief flowers in bloom. Over all was a bright May sun, which shone full upon the formidable captain. Yet not to many persons would Captain Gordon have appeared very formidable.

He was a short, square-built little man, but without much superfluous flesh, and had a pleasant, somewhat humorous countenance, with a manner kind yet peremptory, as one accustomed to command.

"Well, youngster!" was his salutation to Harry, who blushed crimson under his keen glance, yet looked the arbiter of his fate ingenuously in the face. The captain's countenance relaxed into a smile.

"Be a good lad," he said, "and we'll make a jolly tar of you yet," at which words Jenny took courage to look at him for the first time. But, if he had smiled with benevolence upon Harry, he actually beamed upon Jenny, and, with all the chivalry of a

sailor, which makes up in heart-felt tenderness what may be lacking in outward polish, he devoted himself to her entertainment for quite half an hour. Jenny thought him the most delightful of men, and was very happy about Harry's future.

The day came for his departure—a day like a dream to Jenny; for are not all exceptional and solemn days like dreams? The day of marriage, the day of death, all days which make a crisis, are, while they pass, like waking visions. Only the common-place seems real, and, when that has passed away to return no more, it seems more like a dream even than the exceptions, and truly, in hackneyed words which do not seem hackneyed then, like a tale that is told.

Harry did not start, like his father, on horseback. He went with the captain himself in the mail-coach for the north which

was to take them to Edinburgh. He sat on the top behind the coachman, who was gorgeously attired in scarlet, the guard in the back seat also in scarlet coat. The latter functionary blew the horn, the shining brass glittering bright in the sunlight. The four spanking horses started off at full speed, and his heart, which had been sinking just a little, swelled with pride and joy as he called out, "Good-bye, Jenny—dear Jenny, don't cry!"

Jenny watched the coach till it was out of sight, then she took Agnes Gordon's arm, and they walked silently up the steep street, on one half of which lay the dark shadows of the houses, while the other was bathed in the bright sunshine of May. It was not till they took leave of one another that Jenny saw that Agnes's eyes too were full of tears.

"How good you are, Agnes!" she said;

“and it was so good of you to give Harry such a nice present, and all your own work—just as if he had been one of your own brothers.”

The present had been a little case, containing needles and cotton, and buttons and scissors; for Captain Gordon had said sailors must have such things, and must sew on their own buttons with their own clumsy fingers. Agnes made no answer except to return warmly Jenny's embrace. But she was always a true friend to Jenny, and always so kind and sensible. People said Agnes Gordon was too sensible, and on that account gave her less credit than she deserved for the warmth of her heart and the strength of her feelings.

A letter from Harry before sailing for the West Indies, full of happy anticipations, was of much service in restoring Jenny's spirits, and then everything returned to the old

sleepy life as it was generally at Redshiels, and the summer passed and the autumn came, and Jenny grew in stature, but not in strength. She still listened with a fascination which was rather pain than pleasure to Margaret's narratives, which appeared to be quite inexhaustible. Once Janet ventured to ask Margaret if she was never afraid when she thought of these awful tales of ghosts and witches and malignant spirits, confessing that at times they made her lie awake at night.

"Ou," said Margaret, "I dinna like gaun through the kirkyard i' the mirk, or even i' the gloaming. There's bogles in a' kirkyards; there's an unco ane in Redshiels kirkyard; but I ne'er lie waken at nicht. Sune's I blaw cot the cannel, I shut my een and jump into bed. I am whiles feared something nicht grip at my fit as I loup in."

Margaret had much more real belief in

the stories she told than her listener had ; but she was a girl of strong nerves, and without that power of imagination to which mere ideas have all the force and vividness of substantial realities. She was also, in body, strong and healthy, and her faith in what, for want of a better word, I must continue to call the supernatural, but slightly influenced her feelings or her actions. Her speculative and her actual belief ran, as it were, in two grooves, which never crossed. So it was, likewise, with Janet, but in a different way. With her reason Janet did not believe in ghosts and witches. She even felt as if it were wicked, as well as foolish, to believe in them ; but not the less did she feel on those awful moonlight nights a horror at her heart, and in every nerve and fibre of her body.

So time passed on, one day, one month, one year almost like another. Harry wrote

often, but did not come back, and Jenny was a child no longer. Yet life had passed so gently and so gradually that it was impossible to say how and when the change had come, and Jenny herself hardly recognized it.

One night—Janet was now not quite sixteen—she was invited to drink tea at Doctor Gordon's. Tea was at six o'clock, and nine was the hour for returning home. The doctor dined "late," that is, at four o'clock, and there was no supper.

"Marget," said Miss Tommie, "is going into the town, and will walk down with you. The moon will be up before you come back, and you can easily come home yourself."

"Ye will not be frightened, my bonnie Jenny, will ye?" said her grandmother.

"Frightened! What should she be frightened for? A big girl like her!"

Jenny had been on the point of confessing that she should be a little frightened, but the contemptuous tone in which her aunt spoke kept her silent. She would have died rather than say she was afraid.

She spent a pleasant evening at Doctor Gordon's. Agnes Gordon was not only kind and sensible, but was reckoned "the best scholar" at Miss Carnegie's school. She made beautiful bead mats too, transferred prints upon wooden screens and boxes with great success. Jenny regarded her talents with respect, and, if it had not been that she was so amiable, she would have feared that so accomplished a girl would have looked down on her. After tea the young people played a game with cards.

Agnes Gordon and one or two of her school-companions began to talk of a young man who had done the duty "in chapel"

last Sunday, meaning, by chapel, the Scottish Episcopal Church.

"The handsomest man I ever saw," said one.

"They say he is an Oxford man, and is so very clever."

Jenny listened with all her ears. She had a great respect for clever people, and an Oxford man must, of course, be very clever. It had, somehow, escaped her that Doctor Gordon was an Oxford man, but then he was clever, if very familiar.

A great deal more was said about this fascinating gentleman, who, it turned out, had come for a few weeks, or months, to take old Mr. White's duty.

Jenny felt as if she would give a great deal to see and listen to this wonderful stranger. She did so long to know clever people, and, if it had been possible—but, alas! it was not—to be clever herself. She

had had no education to speak of, and was only a woman. Oh! if Aunt Tommie would only let her go to Miss Carnegie's! and if there was only the smallest chance of her meeting Mr. Stanmore—that was his name—at tea-parties, as other girls did! It was so hard always to feel herself inferior in everything.

All these thoughts, and all the talk which had excited them, were so interesting that Jenny had not had much time to think of her dreaded walk home.

CHAPTER IX.

A MOONLIGHT ADVENTURE.

SERVANTS came to escort the other girls to their homes. Katie Rutherford went in the same direction as Jenny Setoun, so, as she said, they could go the greater part of the way together. Now Major Rutherford's house did not lie along the turnpike-road to the Brae, but along a back lane, and by a pleasant suburb. When you were at Major Rutherford's, you were not very many minutes from the Brae. The nearest way, then, lay through the churchyard, which cut off a considerable angle.

"Now, Janet," said Katie Rutherford,

"you won't be frightened to run the rest of the way yourself. Isabel might have gone with you ; but it is papa's supper-time, and he can't bear to be kept waiting a minute."

"I shall go round by the road, I think."

"What for?" cried Katie, laughing. She was a tall, fair, rosy girl, who took everything with a high hand, and was a leader among the Miss Carnegies' girls.

"Are you afraid of ghosts?"

"Well, then, I daresay I had better go by the churchyard," Jenny answered, with forced courage, but with a fainting heart.

"Of course you had," said Katie, in a tone which meant, and Jenny understood to mean, "you would be a fool if you went any other way."

"Folks say," said Isabel, "that auld Nesbit, who built Plunder Ha', walks whiles."

Katie laughed long and merrily.

“Nonsense, Isabel ! She wants to frighten you, Janet ; but I wouldn’t be made a fool of, if I were you.”

“But who was old Nesbit ?—and where is Plunder Hall ?”

“It was before our time,” said Katie.

“He was an awfu’ man—a writer,” said Isabel, “that built the Aiks ; but puir folks ca’ it Plunder Ha’ to this ’oor. Folks say it was built wi’ the spoils o’ the weedow and the fatherless. He was that near, too, he wad ha’ skinned a flint ; and when he dee’d——”

“Nonsense, Isabel ! You are forgetting papa’s supper. Good night, Jenny. It is a lovely moonlight—like day, almost. I envy you your walk. There’s nothing I should have liked better, if I had dared to keep papa waiting.”

Jenny could not bear that anybody should despise her, and she saw Katie

would have despised her with unspeakable contempt if she had showed any fear. Besides this, she despised herself. She knew it was silly and cowardly, and she could not bear to be silly and cowardly.

The church and the churchyard at Redshiels were a little outside of the town, just between the two "genteel" suburbs of the Brae and Paradise Gardens, where Major Rutherford lived. The houses were much finer and larger at Paradise Gardens than at the Brae. The church stood in the middle of the churchyard, which was on a rising ground, fenced round with a wall, steep to the road, and a mere low parapet towards the inside. The edifice itself was oblong in form, and built of blue, rough-hewn stone, with a great folding door in the end, and great square windows all round. The grass was long in the churchyard, weedy and nettly, though the paths

were well kept ; and altogether, the situation was pretty by day, when the dew glittered on the graves in the morning light, or the shadows of the ash-trees, which formed a belt on the upper side of the graveyard, lay over them long and soft in the summer sunset.

Many people might have been found who would have thought it pretty now by the moonlight of the chill September night, but to Janet it was too weird and ghostly to be beautiful. The path lay close under the ash-trees. Beneath the trees was a thick undergrowth of gorse, and broom, and brake, stretching away to an upland moor. Janet did not like passing close under these trees. The white lights and dark waving shadows seemed to assume such strange, unearthly forms, and there was no saying what might be hidden in that brushwood. It came into her mind that she might cross

the churchyard where it sloped to the east, and the moon lay full upon it; but the grass was so long, so heavy with moisture, and—and besides, who or *what* might not start up from behind the tall tombstones? So she abandoned the notion as soon as it came into her head.

Poor Janet! she felt cowardly and faithless, yet not without resolution. She entered upon the path under the trees, trying, poor child, to beguile the way with saying hymns to herself. But somehow she could not attend to the hymns; other verses, other thoughts, suggested by the scene, forced themselves into her mind, and drove out the hymns. Not long before, she had found among her grandmother's scanty supply of books, which were kept in a cupboard in the parlour, an odd volume of Southey, containing his "Old Woman of Berkeley." This she had devoured, likewise the author's

own parody upon it, the "Surgeon's Tale." It would have been difficult to say which had produced the more terrible impression, the supernatural and moral horrors of the one, or the actual horrors of the other, which quite overwhelmed any sense of wit or humour it might otherwise have possessed for Janet.

These were the days of the "Resurrectionists," and the murders of Burke, Hare, and their gang were yet recent, and had made a horrible impression upon the public mind. Innocent Jenny had read of wickedness in history and in the Bible, but that there should be such dark and hideous crime so near her own life seemed monstrous, to be felt rather than believed.

It was thus as she walked under the trees and the wind soughed through the branches, and strange rustlings were heard in the broom and "whins," that she could neither

drive the thoughts of the Resurrectionists, nor of the fiends who carried off the horrible "old woman," out of her head. Every step she took, her heart grew fainter and her steps more uncertain. She could neither hear nor see aright. Shapes of strange things seemed to rise in the shadow of the church, and to waver in the air. Hitherto her path had lain outside the belt of trees, which was upon her right hand; and on her left the sloping churchyard, bright with moonlight. But she was now approaching the church between which and the wood the path ran in the darkest shadow, when all at once, just before she entered upon this gulf of blackness, a long, moving, human—surely it must be human—shadow, as if it had arisen behind an unusually tall, upright gravestone she had been looking at a moment before, fell right across her path. Then she noticed that it had wings, and not arms,

and on its head something flat and strange.

With a last effort at courage, she turned towards the object from which the shadow came, and as she beheld a black figure—and yes, it *had* wings, clear in the moonshine—she uttered a low scream of wildest terror, vaguely conscious, with the last expiring effort of sense, that something clasped her in its arms as she fell.

When she came to herself, she was in a dark, chill place, in which there still seemed to be faint shimmers of moonlight. She was lying on something hard and narrow, and something warm was laid over her. Once more the cold sweat broke out upon her brow. *Where* was she? Could she be in her grave? It felt so like it, but there was space and air. No, it could not be her grave. She moved and tried to sit up, and then a hand was laid upon her, and she screamed.

"Poor little thing!" said a kind, human voice, with a remarkable purity of tone, of which even then she was aware.

"Am I in heaven? Is it papa?" asked Jenny, still feeling as if the horror she had experienced could have been nothing but death.

"No, you are not in so nice a place as heaven," and there was a smile in the tone, "and I am nobody's papa. Where is your papa, my dear little girl? Can I take you to him?"

"No, papa is in heaven—that is to say, his soul is in heaven. His body is at the bottom of the sea. That is why I thought I was in heaven."

"*What* is why you thought you were in heaven?"

"When I heard your voice after being so frightened, I thought you must be papa."

"What a dear girl!" thought the young

man, not a little flattered, for he was a little vain of his voice. "You are only in Red-shiels Kirk. The old beadle, as they call him, happened to be dusting the cushions when you fainted, and I carried you in out of the damp. But why were you alone, and what frightened you so much?"

"I was coming home from tea at Dr. Gordon's; Katie Rutherford came with me as far as the stile, and I—I am very silly, I know—I was thinking of the Resurrectionists and—other things, and all at once I fancied I saw something which—which had black wings—and——"

Then the stranger laughed.

"What you saw was myself. I, too, have been out at tea—at old Mrs. Dickson's of Dicksonside. Perhaps you know her. She has lived in Scotland all her life, and had never seen an Oxford man's gown. Mr. White is a St. Bees man, and so I took my

gown and cap with me, and, as it was cold coming back, I put on the gown. That was all. I am so sorry it frightened you."

"I am better now," said Jenny. "I can go home."

"You must not go alone. You must take my arm. My name is George Stanmore, and I am a clergyman."

This, then, was the very Oxford man of whom they had been speaking at the Gordons, who was so clever and charming, and Jenny felt he was very charming. Feeling desperately shy and ashamed, she took his offered arm, but she was so weak, and her nerves had sustained such a shock, she could hardly walk, and trembled violently.

When they came out of the church into the moonlight, George Stanmore stole a look of some curiosity at the little girl who had fancied, from his voice, that he was a saint

in heaven. He thought he had never before seen so white a face, or such great dark eyes—at least, as they looked in the light of the full moon. She seemed older, too, than he had fancied she was, when he carried her into the church; almost a woman. He now began to be aware she was hardly able to go on.

“Lean on me,” he said. “Have you far to walk? or shall I run to Redshiels and fetch a postchaise?”

“No, it is only a short way. I have had a cold, and am not very well, that is all. Oh! you must not fetch a chaise!” cried Jenny, between dread of being left alone, and even greater dread of what Aunt Tommie would say if she were to arrive at home in a chaise. She made an immense effort, such an effort as Jenny Setoun was capable of, and managed to get on, with Mr. Stanmore’s help, till they reached the gate lead-

ing to the Brae houses. Then her strength gave way completely, her head swam, and she had only time to call out, "I am fainting again!" when she became once more quite insensible.

She was dimly conscious of a bustle and lights, of her aunt's countenance, severe and perturbed, and of a pleasant voice which lulled her like music, but it was all vague. The lights seemed to come out of and disappear into darkness, the faces to come forth from a mist, the voice to be heard in a dream. She felt very weak. Was she dying? If so, it would be pleasant to die.

CHAPTER X.

AGNES AND KATIE.

JANET SETOUN was not dying. In truth that fainting fit, coming when it did, might possibly have been the means of saving her life, as, during the confinement to her own room which supervened, she lost the cough which Dr. Gordon had listened to for some time not without alarm.

George Stanmore sent the doctor to the Brae before he went home for the night, having related to him the circumstances under which he had met Miss Setoun. As the doctor partly expected, he found her, on his arrival, in the first stage of nervous fever.

"She had probably been growing too fast," he said, and he fancied she must have received some severe shock to her nervous system. He was confirmed in this opinion when, in the occasional fits of mental wandering which occurred during the progress of the fever, she talked about stealing the dead, and fiends waiting for the souls of the dying, with references to other matters to which the auditors possessed no clue.

"When she gets better, Miss Tait, as I trust she may," said Dr. Gordon, "you had better send her to Miss Carnegie's school. To have some wholesome employment for her mind, and a few companions of her own age, will be the best thing for her."

"And she will get better, doctor, you think?" said the old lady, anxiously. "I have lost sae many ; but, to be sure, I shall sune see them now."

"I hope this one is not going, though,"

said the doctor, cheerfully; "but you must take great care of her, make her eat plenty, and keep her mind cheerful."

All which Miss Tait listened to, with feelings painfully mixed, feeling that in one sense it was her duty to do all the doctor ordered, and in another, that it was very hard—so hard as to be almost impossible. Surely Providence dealt very hardly with her; but, while she thought this, she had all the time a latent feeling that it was wicked to find fault (even justly) with Providence. She liked Jenny better than anybody in the world but her mother, and, if she had only been a rich woman, she would have loved her. It would have all been easy if she could only have seen her way for the future.

While she went about with a divided mind, and a face which reflected her sombre thoughts, her mother sat watching by

Jenny's little bed, feeling that God and her daughter Tommie would somehow make all worldly matters come right, and thinking only of her child, and her 'chances of recovery.

In those days, after the fever had been subdued, Jenny and "grannie" became dearer than ever to one another. In truth, Jenny was happy. She suffered no pain. She was never left alone, and had nothing to fear. She was very tired, certainly; but it was pleasant to lie there without any care or responsibility, and feel how kind everybody was, even Aunt Tommie. One day, when she was in one of her restless fits, and Aunt Tommie came and smoothed her pillow, and bathed her head with vinegar, Jenny threw her arms round her neck, and said,

"You are so good to me, Aunt Tommie."

Miss Tait turned away, with a pang like remorse at heart. But from that moment

the girl was dear to her as her own child.

"Miss Jenny," said Margaret, one day, "I met that young minister, the minister o' the English kirk, at the gate, as I came in. He had been inquiring for you, he said. He aye asks for you whenever I meet him, that anxious-like."

Jenny said nothing at the moment, but her pallid face flushed, and deep down to the very bottom of her heart struck a pang of the keenest delight. She had never spoken of the stranger who had been at once the cause of her paroxysm of fear, and her deliverer in that awful crisis; but only the more had she thought of him, till, magnified by her memory and imagination, he had assumed in her eyes heroic proportions. And to hear that he had thought of her, too, this wonderful Oxford man! She longed to question Margaret about him; but some shyness withheld her.

The girl lived entirely in a world of her own, a world which was as unlike as possible to the world of reality and common-place. She was aware, it is true, that it was not very like Redshiels; but, in her inexperienced heart, she fancied that somewhere upon this earth its counterpart must exist.

George Stanmore, for instance, looked quite like one of the inhabitants of this grander and more beautiful world, where, no doubt, people had high aims and noble thoughts, and where they were so very, very clever. No doubt, to be in such a world as this would make her feel very shy, and, perhaps, one so simple as herself would fill in it but a humble place; still it would be a privilege to admire and worship even, as it were, afar off. Then came the thought that George Stanmore had asked for her, and Margaret, on another occasion, seemed

to think he had even said he was coming to see her as soon as she was downstairs. Surely he must have liked her, or, was it all his benevolence? He was a clergyman, and, besides being very clever, was, doubtless, very good.

She felt a little humbled at the idea of how small she must look in the eyes of such a paragon of perfection. She was only a girl too, not even quite grown up yet, not half so accomplished as Agnes Gordon, and utterly wanting in the imposing presence, ready speech, and demonstrative individuality of Katie Rutherford, qualities which made the latter somebody wherever she appeared. She wondered what George Stanmore thought of Agnes Gordon and Katie Rutherford. She was aware that he knew them both.

As she began to recover, and was able to sit up in an easy chair in her own bed-room,

these two girls were severally admitted to see her. Agnes, kind and sensible, would not talk too much, lest she should fatigue her; but she brought some sealing-wax and card-board to show her how she might make a little basket for the drawing-room table, to hold visiting-cards, and she left her Scott's "Rob Roy" to read.

That was a delightful afternoon for Janet. She had read, as we know, some of Scott's poems, but she had never read any of his novels; indeed, she had never read any novels at all, a circumstance to which, no doubt, her extreme ignorance of life was partly owing. She began "Rob Roy" the instant Agnes was gone, and was soon lost in it. The outward world was nothing to her. The sealing-wax basket was unthought of. She ate her meals without knowing what she was eating. She had, for the time, even forgotten Mr. Stanmore. But at night,

after she was in bed, the thought of him mixed itself up somehow with the novel. If she had only been like Die Vernon, Mr. Stanmore might have been eager to have interviews with her, as Frank Osbaldistone was to have interviews with Die Vernon. But she was not in the least like Die Vernon, she knew. Oh, how she wished she were! For Jenny was just at the age when a romantic girl wishes to be like every attractive heroine she reads about.

The next day Katie came, not at all in the quiet, sensible, helpful way in which Agnes made her visit. She threw the door of Jenny's little room wide open, and entered, accompanied by a rush of air, which gave the invalid a fit of coughing. Then she shut the door with decision, and without making any apology for the noise or the shake it gave to the room. Katie Rutherford never made an apology, for the simple

reason that she did not think she ever did anything which required one.

She was a tall, bright-complexioned girl, rather younger than Jenny, but looking two years older, straight as an arrow, with a firm, elastic step, and a look as if she had never known a day's pain or sickness, or a doubt or a fear, in her life.

"Well, Jenny! I have been so sorry to hear you were ill, and would have come again and again to see you, but Aggie told me her father said I was not. I don't believe myself that it would have done you a bit of harm. So you fainted that night after I left you? You should have told me you felt poorly, and I would not have let you go alone. Now mind, you must tell me another time."

"I will, Katie—I will. But I did not know I was going to faint."

"What a lucky thing Mr. Stanmore met

you! He has told me all about it. We see a great deal of him. He is a very clever, gentlemanly young man. When you are well, you must go with us some Sunday to hear him preach, though we Episcopalians don't think the sermon everything, as you Presbyterians do."

"When we lived at Plymouth, we were not Presbyterians."

But Katie went on, as if she had not heard her—

"I told Mr. Stanmore how delicate and how nervous you were. I shall bring him to call on you some day, when the tiresome doctor will let me. What is the use of bottling you up in this way?"

"The doctor must know best, and he has been so kind."

"Know best!—stuff and nonsense! Mr. Stanmore is at our house almost every day. He is a man of very good family, and, I

Nor was there any sun shining through the blind when she woke in the morning.

"I shall not go," thought Jenny; "it is too much to expect." Then she got up and looked out.

A grey cloud covered the sky like a tent; but it was not leaden and sullen like a rain-cloud, but soft and pearly. There was in it even a certain beauty and fitness with the autumn scene over which it stretched; with the white road, upon which lay the sere, dry leaves; with the reddening berries in the hedges, the yellow stubble-field, and the russet-clad branches which overhung the scaur.

"It will never do, Jenny," said her aunt, as she came down to breakfast.

"Hout, Tommie!" said her mother. "A'body kens the misty mornings make the finest days in the back end."

"We will see at twelve o'clock," said Miss Tommie, "if the sun shines."

At half-past eleven the sun did not shine, but both the old lady and Jenny were less inclined than ever to think it would rain. It was a grey, calm, mild autumn day, such a day as Jenny unconsciously loved better, perhaps, than a brighter one.

“If the sun shines,” began Miss Tommie, but as she spoke the bang of the gate, succeeded by gay voices, was heard outside. It was Katie Rutherford and Mr. Stanmore come to see if Jenny was ready—Katie Rutherford looking happy and handsome in a new violet-blue merino, trimmed with swansdown, and a grey beaver bonnet. Katie bore down all opposition, even Miss Tommie’s.

“It would not rain,” she was sure; “a finer day for the season nobody had ever seen. Come along, Jenny, we are going to be off at once; we have plenty of shawls and

cloaks. Good morning, Miss Tait. Come along, Mr. Stanmore."

Mr. Stanmore, in the meantime, had been saying polite things—kind things, they might have been called—to Jenny. She thought him more charming and clever even than she had supposed, and she had never seen anybody so good-looking; he had such expressive eyes, as well as a finely-modulated voice, and then he must know so much, have gone over so vast an extent of learning. Such was Jenny's estimation of an Oxford man at that simple and inexperienced period of her life.

Then he showed such an interest in her recovery. How unlike he was to the young men at Redshiels, towards whom she had always felt as towards an alien race of beings! It was a pleasant drive to Rae Tower, but Jenny did not, as she had hoped, go in the same carriage as George Stan-

more. He drove a large "double gig," for wagonettes were not in those days, containing Katie and some other young persons of both sexes, while Jenny and Katie's father and younger sister went in the Major's phaeton, which had a hood that would draw up if it should rain.

All these arrangements, which, it must be confessed, were not bad ones, had been made by Katie. She had no mother, and had assumed to the full the position Mrs. Rutherford would have occupied in the household and in society. Katie never felt her youth a drawback in taking any position. Her father was not a clever man, but one could not easily have called him a stupid one. He was as vain and as important and as talkative as Katie herself, but Katie had inherited besides, the good qualities of her mother,—sense, tact, and management. In her father's opinion she was very clever,

and, indeed, in that of many other persons. Katie had no diffidence to be any drawback to her abilities; she could produce such as she possessed without any difficulty, and the world gave her credit for many more than she possessed. Everybody, for instance, considered Katie a very fine singer. She had a high, remarkably clear voice, and sang ambitious pieces, and her reputation was established as the prima donna of Redshiels, while no one had ever suspected the beauty of the sweet, rich voice with which Jenny Setoun sang the quaint, old puritan hymns, or the solos in some of Handel's oratorios of which she was passionately, but secretly fond. She had found selections from them in an old music-book stowed away in a cupboard in the garret, and, though Miss Tommie had asked her one day what old-fashioned rubbish was that she had got, Jenny, though very apt to think anybody's

judgment better than her own, did not change her mind in this case. She was as sure it was beautiful music as that the sun gave light; she saw it as we *see* all things of which we are really profoundly convinced. Jenny would have been nobody at Redshiels, had it not been for the extreme respectability of her family and the position the Taites had always held in the place. It was something too to be come of the Raes of Rae, and so Jenny herself felt as she approached all that remained to attest the importance and the antiquity of her family.

Major Rutherford had talked to her all the way, for there was no one but Jenny in whose eyes he could magnify himself.

"The Rutherfords," he said, "are as old a family as the Raes. In fact, Miss Setoun, I may say that, except yourselves and ourselves, old Mrs. Dickson of Dicksonside though, too, there is nobody of any pretension

to birth in Redshiels. The Gordons, they say, are well born, and Dr. Gordon's father, I believe, was an officer, and his grandfather, brother of some laird. But, of course, one does not know how he came by his lairdship. I have always suspected he was a successful farmer, though some farmers are of very good blood, too."

So Major Rutherford prosed on, till Jenny found it difficult to keep from yawning. But she blamed herself, and not the Major, for this inclination. Jenny ought to have had a large organ of veneration, for at this period of her life she fancied all people of the Major's age must be much wiser than herself, and that, if their conversation wearied her, it was somehow on account of her own inferiority, a sensation which naturally made her feel slightly humbled in her own eyes. On the present occasion it did just glance across her mind to

wonder whether the Major could be quite right in thinking that to be of an old family was quite the most important thing in the world, as he evidently did think. It was certainly "very nice" to belong to a good family, it put one at one's ease, and one had a strong motive to do nothing to disgrace it, and one could the more gracefully do honour to those qualities which the instinctive nobleness of Jenny's own soul told her were above all worldly distinctions.

During the drive, there was, altogether, a great struggle between Jenny's politeness and her inclinations. How she should have liked to shut her ears to the Major's wearisome, pompous talk, and to give herself up to the dreamy thoughts suggested by the day and the landscape through which they were passing! Yet many persons would not have thought the land-

scape very attractive, though Jenny liked it. She liked the unenclosed road ever ascending the high, heathy, barren country, which was yet so beautiful in its misty blues and greens, brightened now and then by the gold of the furze, or the scarlet berries of the dog-roses. She liked the distant views of the yellow stubble fields, and the autumn woods, divided by the Yule like a silver thread, and she liked the occasional groups of aromatic firs, or the rare clumps of ash, with their leaves strewing the ground around in a bright yellow circle.

It continued as it had begun, a mild, grey autumn day, sad yet sweet, and Jenny would have liked, instead of listening to the Major, to have quoted to herself little bits of poetry, and to have enjoyed the luxury of the melancholy, not too great, inspired by the scene.

At last they reached Rae Tower, which Jenny had seen before her for some half hour on the horizon standing out against the sky. It was a ruinous old tower, crowning a heathery, whinny knoll. Wall-flower grew in the crevices of the walls, coped now by stonecrop and lichen, and ivy of luxuriant growth covered one side completely, looking amidst the autumn hues of crimson and yellow like shadow in the picture. Jenny was rather disappointed to find that grannie's father and mother had not lived in the old tower, but in a rather common-place-looking slated house, with shallow eaves, which stood close by in a large garden, with a clump of elder-trees on each side of an iron gate. It was delightful to Jenny to find that George Stanmore was at the door of the carriage ready to help her down.

Most of the party pronounced themselves

very hungry, and Katie declared she must see after the dinner, which, as it was so late in the season, was to be partaken of in a barn. She evidently wished to press Mr. Stanmore into her service, to assist with the superintendence of the servants, and some of the details of preparation, but he pleaded a promise to explore the tower with Jenny.

"We are going to do that after dinner," said Katie. "It will be much better fun then, when we are all there."

But George Stanmore quite understood Jenny's desire to go more quietly. He was just a little bit both romantic and sentimental himself, really, but not deeply so, for indeed his nature in everything was wanting in depth.

It would be much pleasanter (and a nice change too) to be quoting poetry, with Jenny's eyes fixed admiringly on him, than to be laughing and talking with Katie amid

the clatter of plates and the bustle of unpacking.

George Stanmore was one of those who rarely, in deciding any line of conduct, asked himself further than if it would be pleasant. He admired Katie Rutherford immensely. It was the fashion to do so at Redshiels, and George Stanmore, at least while he was there, did not like to be out of the fashion in even a Scotch country town; but in his heart he preferred Jenny. Katie did not care about old ruins and poetry, and was inclined to laugh at sentimental talk, on all which subjects he believed himself to shine.

It was quite a pleasant half hour he had with Jenny while they were waiting for luncheon. He had quoted and discussed Mrs. Hemans and Walter Scott, and had asked Jenny if she had ever heard of a delightful American poet, called Longfellow,

before they were summoned, and as Jenny listened and admired, he had become aware that she had the finest, most romantic dark eyes he had ever seen, and that her complexion, though not fair, was just of that smooth, fine texture and pale rich colour which looks so magnificent by candle-light. True, she was but an unformed thing in every way, no figure, no style, but he could not be insensible to her evident admiration and reverence for himself. Yes, she was more interesting than Katie, and though it was due to him to be first in the favour of the belle of the neighbourhood, still there would be something more tender and flattering in a flirtation with Jenny, and we must do George Stanmore the justice to say he did not suspect how much deeper and more real Jenny's romance was than his own.

She would be, nay, she was, he was sure, desperately in love with himself; but the

words "desperately in love" meant, in George's imagination, something very different from what they meant in Jenny's. To be desperately in love was, according to George, what a man might be over and over again, every few months even, supposing a sufficiently exciting object were to present itself as frequently. Jenny's idea of love, on the contrary, was pretty well expressed in a poem she had met with in one of Miss Ferrier's novels—for "Marriage" had succeeded "Rob Roy"—beginning—

"To keep one sacred flame
Through life unchanged, unmoved,
To love in wintry age the same
That first in youth we loved."

Young, girlish Jenny had wondered, as she read these lines, if such a love would ever come to her. It had seemed unlikely she should ever meet anybody in Redshiels to attain the high standard that, she felt,

alone could call forth such worship. And, even if there should be such a person, how unlikely he should be attracted to her. Somehow, it was only old gentlemen who seemed to take to Jenny. She had indeed not thought very much on the subject, but such, or something similar, were the ideas which had floated vaguely through her mind ; nor did she think at all of George Stanmore as a possible lover. She was far too humble to raise her eyes so high, and the enjoyment of the present moment was sufficient. As she stood on the top of Rae Tower, the upper branches of the mountain ash hanging their scarlet clusters over the ruined wall, and the wide, wild landscape spread out at her feet, with the pearly autumn sky bending over all, while George Stanmore quoted little bits of poetry and talked sentimental but not otherwise than intelligent small talk, it seemed to her that

life could give nothing pleasanter than these quiet minutes on that sweet, sunless October day.

But Katie's voice was heard at the bottom of the tower calling to them peremptorily yet pleasantly to come down at once. She took possession of George, telling Jenny she had secured a nice seat for her where there were no draughts.

"Even Dr. Gordon, fidgetty as he is, would, I am sure, say it was impossible for you to catch cold."

All the rest of the day Katie monopolized George Stanmore, and took care of Jenny, as if the latter had been a child committed to her superintendence. Jenny felt it very kind, for many of Katie's arrangements were comfortable and judicious, though she hardly liked the fuss made about her. In the evening there was a dinner-tea for all the party at Major Rutherford's, and George

Stanmore sat for a time by Jenny in the drawing-room while Katie was "executing a brilliant piece" on the piano. He talked of the latter with some admiration, as a fine, clever, effective girl, and such a wonderful manager of an entertainment—"quite the sort of person," he said, "to be a great lady."

As he spoke, Jenny's heart sank a little, conscious how different all this was from herself; how the last thing in the world that would suit her would be to be a great lady; how she could never talk and manage and direct, and take upon her to be mistress, like Katie. No, certainly she was very unlike Katie, and a feeling of mortification crept into her heart and kept her silent.

After a short pause he asked,

"Do you remember our first meeting, when you were so frightened?"

"Yes. Don't speak of it. I am so ashamed. What a goose I was!"

"Don't be ashamed. All finer natures have an affinity with the spiritual. The humdrum matter of fact which can realize nothing except what it can touch and handle is not interesting. Would you mind telling me exactly what you felt that night? I should like so much to know."

Thus encouraged, Jenny gave the required narrative, but not without a beating heart. George listened with real interest, mixed with not a little amusement, but feeling that, after all, Jenny was far more interesting than Katie, almost more interesting than any girl he had ever met before, and he was sure he was fast falling in love with her. He did not trouble himself much about consequences, for the good reason that his love affairs very rarely had any consequences for himself, and probably

this was why it never seemed to strike him that they could have any for anyone else. As to love ending in marriage, that was a different thing altogether. A man would, of course, be a fool to marry without something a little more substantial than love—at least, unless he were rich enough to afford it—an enviable position, certainly!

To Jenny this pleasant talk was like a foretaste of heaven. Poor Jenny was very apt to feel herself nobody among the older, higher-spirited, less sensitive girls of her acquaintance at Redshiels, and, quite independently of any incipient affection she might have for George Stanmore, his regard was very gratifying. If she had any such affection—and probably she had—it was certainly, as yet, latent. In Jenny's day, young ladies were not so *prononcées* and demonstrative in their love affairs as they are now; they still allowed the other sex

to take the initiative, and if they loved first their instinct was to hide it. It was the fashion then to err on the sentimental and feminine side, rather than in the rude, coarse, masculine direction which now prevails. One may hope, however, that the present fashion is but the mocking shadow of a better reality; and that as the past affectation of shrinking sensibility was the coarse imitation of the delicacy, tenderness, and refinement which are the inherent qualities of every true woman, so the blustering demonstrations of our own day are but the spurious type of that pure truthfulness, just self-reliance, and unaffected dignity becoming to every human creature conscious of her own honesty and of her own duty to understand the best, do the best, and use for the best the powers, whatever they may be, with which her nature has been gifted. That division into virtues, masculine and femi-

nine, not only as an existing fact, but as creating opposite standards of perfection, which was never more the fashion than it is now, has no place either in pure ethics or in Christian morality. Right is right, and wrong is wrong for everybody.

That in the abstract, from physical and social circumstances, men are more apt to possess, in a higher degree, one set of virtues and women another is doubtless true, with exceptions; just as different classes of society and different nations do the same, and for the same reason; but that they are meant to cultivate these to the exclusion of the opposite virtues is probably the reverse of the Creator's intention. If He has commanded us to be perfect, if He has set before us a perfect example, summing up in Himself all virtue, masculine and feminine, and bidden us to copy *it*, is it not more likely that, in order to attain this

perfection, man is intended to learn from woman to be meek, tender, easy to be entreated, and woman to learn from man to be just, strong, and true ?

It is thus both may be brought fully to confess, and to reverence equally, the two aspects of goodness, and remember they are both summed up in God ; and that, in proportion only as we attain to both, shall we arrive at the full stature of a noble human nature. Meekness is considered a feminine virtue, yet the meekest human being on record was a man, who was at the same time the boldest.

CHAPTER XII.

HALLOWEEN.

BY degrees Jenny Setoun got into better health. Her nerves became stronger, and, above all, she had less wakeful nights. If she still jumped into bed after she had put the extinguisher upon her candle in a wonderful hurry, she never sat upon the stairs again in the cold. Other thoughts, other interests were in her heart, the thoughts and interests of budding womanhood, and, to a great degree, the childish fears, the nervous horrors born of an oversensitive organization, weak health, and a susceptible imagination, fled before the

realities—or, at least, what the young take to be the realities—of life.

Instead of somewhat morbid introspections, of thoughts concentrated wholly on ideas, had come human interests and social ambitions, which, if they were not absolutely healthy, were at least more natural than those of which they took the place. It was pleasant to Jenny to think that she could not be so inferior to other people as she had once fancied in humility and pain, otherwise George Stanmore would not have liked her, and thought well of her, and she was sure he did like her, and think well of her. It had never entered into Jenny's head in those old simple days that, with a certain class of people, inferiority rather than superiority may be a ground of liking.

Never had Redshiels been so gay as it was in the early part of that winter—at

least, not since Miss Tommie Tait and Dr. Gordon had been young. For many years there had been no grown-up young people in the place. It was only now that a new set were blossoming into manhood and womanhood, womanhood more especially, for there were about three maidens to one youth resident in Redshiels. Of the youths some were at sea, some in India, some at college, and, all things good in themselves being prized more or less for their rarity, young men were at a premium, even the shabbiest and most uninteresting young men. One may judge, then, if George Stanmore was not a hero in the eyes of others as well as of Jenny Setoun, who had, on the whole, a higher standard of the heroic than most of the other girls.

It was, therefore, a gay time at Redshiels in the old days of which I am writing, when Scotch country towns were sometimes

gay, and when all the intelligence, good birth, and good means did not take themselves off to some larger social centre.

One day George Stanmore had happened to say at Doctor Gordon's that he had just been trying to see if he knew enough Scotch by this time to enjoy Burns's poems, and that he had been pleased to find he understood a great deal of them.

"I was trying 'Halloween' last night," he continued, "and I must confess, but I believe it was partly from having no knowledge of the usages, that most of it was very incomprehensible. Does anybody ever keep Halloween now? What fun it must be!"

Agnes Gordon's eyes brightened up.

"Mamma," she began, "might we——" but Katie cut her short.

"You must all come and spend Halloween at our house. Papa will be so pleased.

I engage you on the spot, Mr. Stanmore. It is great fun, as you say—capital fun—old Halloween, of course, I mean, and that will be on Thursday week.”

Poor Agnes’s face fell a little. She had been so anxious to have had the Halloween party ; but Katie carried all before her, and, except Jenny, who was also present, nobody noticed Agnes’s disappointment. George Stanmore eagerly accepted the invitation, with a gallant compliment to Katie’s hospitality, and Jenny said shyly she should be very happy to come, then she slid up to Agnes, and took her hand, which the latter pressed warmly, a tear standing in her eye. And when Katie, with her accustomed energy, had carried off George Stanmore to help her to make her preparations at once, Agnes said,

“There never was anybody like Katie for over-riding everybody and everything.

It was very unkind, very unfair of her."

"But everybody likes you best, Agnes dear," said Jenny; "and it is only her way, after all. She means to be kind, I am sure."

Agnes said nothing, but looked as if she hardly acquiesced.

Jenny would have liked to believe everybody she liked perfect, though, having in the main a sound understanding, it was, alas! the older she became, the more difficult to do. But as yet she tried to explain away the failings of her friends, not having, at this early period of her life at least, attained the larger heartedness of seeing their faults and loving them still, with, perhaps, even a deeper tenderness. But youth never loves like this.

At this moment Jenny was happy beyond expression in the prospect of "keeping Halloween," as it was called. She had

long heard of this solemnity, or festivity, and had long desired to witness it, but as yet had never been asked to a Halloween party, or, if she had been asked, had not been able to go in the inclement month of November. Even now she was a little afraid Aunt Tommie would object, and she had much misgiving still about going either by the road, or by the path through the churchyard, when she was alone.

Halloween fell on the market-day, and by the one way she might meet tipsy people, and by the other—it was very foolish, she knew, but she felt as if going by the churchyard were, as regarded the ghost-world, something like going by the road on market-day.

Aunt Tommie offered no opposition to her accepting the invitation, only saying,

“Of course you will not go if it is a very bad night.” But grannie whispered,

“We will manage.”

It was, however, a fine night for November. The moon had not risen, and a light mist obscured the stars, so that Marget, who, to Jenny's great joy, had been sent to accompany her, took a lantern, and suggested they should go by the road.

“It's likely,” she said, “to be an unco' night for bogles i' the kirkyard.”

“I do not believe in ghosts at all, Margaret, though I must confess I am foolish enough not to like going through the churchyard.”

“Now, Miss Jenny, that is fair nonsense to say that you are feared o' bogles, and that there's nae bogles. I'm feared o' bogles, but it's 'cause there *is* bogles.”

And Jenny comprehended how Margaret's was a real material fear of bodily harm, and had nothing to do at all either with a morbid imagination or spiritual

affinities of any kind. At Major Rutherford's gate they met Mr. Stanmore, who told Margaret that she need not return for her young lady. He would see her safe home. Jenny's heart bounded with delight at the thought.

In those old-fashioned, simple days at Redshiels the world in general was not so rich, and poor people had better times rather than under the present plutocracy. Hardly any even of the "best" people, as they called themselves, had carriages. And there were "better" people at Redshiels then than now—a few cadets of the old county families like the Rutherfords and Mrs. Tait, retired officers, and widows and maiden ladies of the class that now take small houses in the new suburb on the south side of Edinburgh, or even go to Bath, Cheltenham, or Torquay.

It was quite the custom, therefore, for

the Redshiels gentility to walk home from their parties, the ladies, if they were single, escorted by servants and lanterns, for there was no gas at Redshiels then. It was also the custom for the younger gentlemen who had no ladies of their own, to see the single ladies home, and, as one may imagine, the custom was not an unpleasant one to either party. But, as I have already said, the gentler sex predominating, many of them had to walk home unattended save by the lanterns and the servants. Katie Rutherford, of course, rarely did. If there was only one disengaged gentleman, as a matter of course he fell to Katie's share. George Stanmore had often done so.

But nobody had, as yet, ever walked home with Jenny. It was a distinction which had not been granted to her. Even when George Stanmore might have gone with her, he had always gone with Katie.

To-night, of course, Katie required no one to go with her. Perhaps that was the reason he was going with Jenny. It was rather a mortifying thought, and qualified a little the pleasure she felt. Still it was a pleasure, and a pride too.

Tea at Major Rutherford's was in the drawing-room, and, immediately afterwards, the Halloween ceremonies commenced in the dining-room. The preparations did not seem to be of a costly or a very refined nature. A large dish of apples stood on the table, which was removed to one end of the room. On it also stood a plate of nuts, another of hemp-seed, with one or two flat candlesticks, two or three empty breakfast-cups, and a jug of water.

The party consisted of young people of various ages, but mostly from twelve to twenty

"Let us burn nuts first," said Katie, and

of course what Katie said was done. "Now who shall we burn?" she cried, not very grammatically—"Agnes and—let us see, who shall we burn with Agnes?"

"Harry Setoun," cried everybody.

"Well, only he is not here, and it is more fun when they are both here."

But it was finally settled that Harry Setoun and Agnes Gordon were to be burnt. Then two large hazel nuts were selected, and set side by side on the top bar of the grate. The fire was in a warm glow all over, and they soon began to burn. But not long did they continue to consume away together, for the nut representing Harry Setoun made a sudden movement and fell into the heart of the fire.

"Harry will have nothing to say to Agnes, Jenny," cried Katie, always the chief spokeswoman, "though I suppose his tumbling into the fire like that means he is to

be desperately in love with somebody.

Who shall we try now?"

"Yourself!" cried a chorus of voices.

"Well, then, myself; but who with?"

"Me!" said George Stanmore, laughing, and bringing two very fine nuts. Katie coloured just a very little, but did not object, and foolish Jenny felt suddenly even more interested than she had done about Harry, though she had really wished that he and Agnes might have burnt steadily on together. She was very fond of Agnes. In the present case Katie caught fire first, and was also the first to jump away, the nut alighting on the hob only half burnt, while George Stanmore as yet was scarcely singed.

"Oh, how badly you have used me, Miss Rutherford!" he cried, laughing. "It is dreadfully mortifying!"

"I think Katie has only served you

right," said Agnes, "considering you did not catch fire at all. Try him with somebody else—with Jenny."

"Yes, with Jenny; do let me retrieve my character from the reproach of such utter insensibility;" and another nut, hastily christened "Jenny," was put down upon the bar, while the pale cheeks flushed up about as hot as the nut, and her foolish heart beat fast.

In the meantime George Stanmore, or at least the nut in which his destiny was supposed to be embarked, had taken fire and began to burn like a little Vesuvius, the flame spreading in a few seconds to that representing Jenny, which ere long began to blaze. Finally the two burnt away together, amidst the laughter and hand-clapping of the assembled company. Nothing was left but their mingled ashes. Poor Jenny felt more awkward and miserable

than ever she had done in her life before, yet all the time inwardly conscious that she had not really wished either of the nuts to jump away. She tried, however, to join in the laughter, but she could not carry it off so successfully as Katie would have done. George Stanmore, however, put her at ease by his own ease and good breeding. He treated the matter as a joke, but as a gratifying joke, and, if he gave her a little more attention than usual, accompanied it with, if possible, an added respect. Jenny was soothed and comforted, and felt more than ever that there was nobody like George Stanmore. Several more nuts were burnt; a few remained in couples, but none burnt away so faithfully as George Stanmore and Jenny Setoun.

“Now we will have the tea-cups,” said Katie. “The cabbage-stalks and the hemp-seed will be better when the moon is up.”

The three cups were then placed in a row on the table. Into one was put some clear water from a jug; into another also water, but mixed with nut-shells, raisin-stalks, and other such *débris* as were at hand; the third was left empty. Katie was the first this time to try her luck. Being blind-folded, the respective places of the cups were altered, and she was led to the table to place her hand in one of them, her future destiny as wife of a bachelor, wife of a widower, or no wife at all, depending upon whether she put her hand in the vessel with pure water, the vessel with the nut-shells, or the empty vessel.

Katie put her hand in the cup containing the nut-shells.

“Katie is to marry a widower,” cried everybody in a breath, with much laughter—“a rich widower, it is to be hoped, and not with too many incumbrances.”

For a moment Katie looked just a little annoyed ; but she soon joined in the laughter, and was foremost in the many jests and allusions made to her own future fate. Agnes Gordon, and several others, then put the same question to the fates, single blessedness falling to Agnes's share. Jenny was the last of the girls to make the trial, shyly shrinking from it, and from some reason, of which she herself was scarcely conscious, wishing to avoid it altogether.

But when Katie, signifying that it was now the gentlemen's turn, and, as a matter of course, was telling Mr. Stanmore to begin, he said,

"All the ladies have not tried yet. Miss Setoun has not tried."

"Oh, Jenny ? I thought she had. Come, Jenny ; don't keep us waiting."

"I don't care—I really don't want——"

But George Stanmore led her up to the table, saying—

“We won’t let you off;” and whispering so that she only could hear, “*I* won’t let you off after the nut.”

Jenny coloured all over, down to the very tips of her fingers, and was so nervous she hardly knew what she was doing. The moment the cups were moved, she put her hand into one without hesitation. It was that containing the pure water.

“All right,” said Agnes Gordon. “It would not have fitted the nut had it been different.”

Katie frowned, and looked for a moment a little put out. Agnes and Katie were not very fond of one another just at that time. But Katie soon recovered herself, reflecting it was all only chance, and that nobody could seriously think Jenny superior, not even Agnes Gordon, and certainly Mr.

Stanmore must have too much sense and taste. She now went to look out of the window, and returned with the information that the moon had risen, and yet it was not quite light enough for them to see well, so it would be just the moment for the cabbage-stalks, which "Marget," on their way from the Brae, had spoken of to Jenny as "kail runts;" but Katie, who piqued herself upon the elegance and correctness of her language, and carefully eschewed the speaking of Scotch, preferred to be totally ignorant that even the "common people" called them by such a name.

This ceremony consisted in all the party going into the kitchen-garden, or rather, for in Scotch gardens everything mostly grows together, into that part of the garden where the cabbages, or kail, grew, and, at random, pulling up by the roots one of the cabbage-stalks from which the cabbage had been

cut. As this stalk was, so was the *futur*, or *future*, of him, or of her, who gathered it. Thus a tall, slim stalk indicated a tall, slim lady or gentleman, a crooked one, a crooked human specimen, and one to which the earth adhered in a large quantity indicated great wealth in the future life-partner.

On the present occasion Jenny again had the luck. She drew the longest and straightest stalk, and a great quantity of earth clung to the roots. Everybody crowded round her to congratulate her—everybody but Katie, who really was a little out of humour. She had drawn the thickest, most contorted stump in the whole garden, and she was but very slightly consoled when George Stanmore pointed out to her that it was literally loaded with earth and little stones. Then he whispered something to her, as he had before whispered to Jenny, though Jenny did not see him whisper to

Katie, and Katie smiled, and was herself again. The whisper was only this—
“These things, you know, always go by contraries,” but the words were accompanied with a look and a smile which only Katie could see in the moonrise, which probably gave emphasis to their meaning.

“Now,” she said, “we must all go back to the house, and whoever wants to sow hemp-seed must come out alone.”

“I shall certainly want to sow hemp-seed,” said George Stanmore, “if you will tell me how to do it, and what it means?”

“You take a handful of the hemp-seed from the dining-room table, and go out alone into the garden, and scatter some seed as if you were sowing it, saying all the time—

‘Hemp-seed, I saw thee ; hemp-seed, I saw thee !

Him that is to be my love come after me, and draw thee.’

Then, when you are walking back towards

the house, you look behind and you see the form of your true love as if gathering the crop."

"Oh! oh!" cried Jenny, "I should be frightened to do that!"

"Frightened!" repeated Katie, not without a little ring of contempt in her tone, which was hardly polite, and which Jenny ought to have despised. But poor foolish Jenny did not despise it. I am much afraid she was not sufficiently lofty-minded for a heroine, for she replied,

"Well, I suppose, there is nothing really to be frightened of."

"Of course not. You don't really believe in seeing anything supernatural. It is all only fun, and means nothing" (this was a consolatory idea for Katie at the moment of her bad luck). "I am sure, Jenny, you are not so weak-minded as to be frightened."

"Oh dear, no!" Jenny agreed, faintly.

"Then suppose you try first."

"Do, Jenny, do," cried a chorus of voices, among which was heard that of Agnes Gordon. Agnes, like Katie, being a very sensible and matter-of-fact, as well as a very kind-hearted girl, did not believe in anybody being really frightened, and was anxious that her friend Jenny should show that she was not so silly as, it had seemed to Agnes, Katie in her jealousy had wanted to make her out.

They were all once more in the house, and poor Jenny saw no way that did not seem to her disgraceful out of the enterprise Katie had imposed upon her. She therefore agreed to go first, and, taking a handful of hemp-seed, set off alone, with what sinking of heart, what mortal fear, we will not inquire. I am sadly afraid her moral courage was even smaller than her physical. Yet she appeared to be doing a courageous

thing, another proof, if any were needed, that, even in this world,

“Nothing is ; but all things seem.”

Now Major Rutherford's garden, as I have said, was constructed after the fashion of Scottish gardens in those days, and looked more like a garden at Geneva, for instance, than a garden in any part of England.

It was large, and in the centre was a great grass plat called “the middle green.” On it, at quite irregular intervals, grew apple and cherry-trees. All round this “green” there were beds of various vegetables, bordered where they approached the gravel-paths with flowers, all withered and dead now, except here and there a stray blue or red salvia, or a china-aster, its head bent heavily down with moisture and mud. A strip of lawn, rather wild and unshaven,

flanked by some shrubs, stretched along the front of the house, and was divided from the "middle green" by a flower-bed which ran the whole way across the garden.

It was a very fine night for the season. The moon had risen behind a row of single trees at the foot of the garden, beyond which stretched the moor, skirted by a road. A low, yellow light came through the leafless branches, casting long, dark shadows up towards the house, round which lay the dusky, mysterious gloom which Milton, in language now unbearably hackneyed, has described as darkness visible. Overhead the sky was yet dark and full of stars. The weather was warm and dry for the season, and the garden-paths were strewn with the sere, yellow leaves, through which the night wind rustled faintly.

Katie had appointed the strip of ground in front of the line of trees at the foot of the garden as the proper place for sowing hemp-seed. In the first place, it could be done from the walk without going in among loose earth, and, in the second, the moon behind would show off any "thing," or, as the Germans call it, "un-thing," that was to be seen. All down the garden, then, had poor Jenny to run alone. Indeed she had to run almost half round it, for there was no path down the middle. That which she chose because it was the shortest lay in the shadow of a tall beech-hedge. Oh! how fast Jenny ran, starting at every twig that moved, and hearing mysterious sounds in the rustle of the withered leaves beneath her tread. She kept her eyes mostly upon the path. She had only cast one look upon the faintly moving shadows and long yellow

lights, but now and then she glanced up at the stars. They did not frighten, they re-assured her.

She had now reached the scene of her strange seed-sowing. At first she thought she would only throw it down, say nothing, and run away. But, after all, she had a nervous yet irresistible feeling of curiosity, like a fascination, as to whether she should see anything. Of course, in her reason, she knew she should not; but to such natures, in such circumstances, the voice of reason, however strong, is impotent as compared with another voice. Then she might be asked when she had returned to the house if she had fulfilled the whole ceremony, and she should be ashamed to say "No." As for any equivocation, Jenny never so much as thought of it. She was at all times purely and earnestly true.

She murmured the foolish rhyme as she

scattered the seed, and then ran off breathless ; as a hare runs before the hounds. She was half way back to the house before she ventured to look round. Hearing sounds from within, and seeing the candle-light shining ruddy through the crimson curtains gave her courage, and she cast a hurried, frightened glance over her shoulder. In spite of her nervous and nameless dread, she was probably quite as much surprised as frightened to see moving against the background of the yellow moonlight a dark figure, apparently endeavouring to gather something. Her heart gave a wild leap, and, uttering a cry of terror, she sprang towards the house, stumbling, in her precipitation, over one of the cabbage-stalks which some inconsiderate person had thrown down on the walk, and falling into a laurel-bush which she had caught at to save herself. It was all like a bad dream, only the

Terror and horror were more acute and real.

She was trying hurriedly to extricate herself from the branches, when suddenly she heard a stout, hearty laughter and hearty commiseration, while three or four of the party ran from behind some screen and stood at her ear. George Samuels said:

"Dear Miss Samuels, are you hurt? Do forgive me—I will tell me," and he helped her by drawing her remaining hand within his arm.

"Are you hurt, Jenny dear?" asked George Jackson anxiously. "They would not hurt you if all that I could say: but it was no harm. I know it was not."

"It was not my fault," said George Jackson. "I thought you would see that you were not hurt and I was just about to tell you when you fell."

What made you fall? You are not hurt, I hope?"

As he spoke he laid his hand tenderly and anxiously on Jenny's, which lay on his arm, and Jenny trembled anew, but from a different cause. At that moment a new and strange sweetness agitated her whole being.

"What a fuss you all make!" cried Katie. "Jenny is not hurt; she will be all right in a minute."

"I am all right now," said Jenny, anxiously hoping, but feeling pretty confident, that no one could have seen that tender movement of Mr. Stanmore's, which had seemed so instinctive and had been so momentary that Jenny did not feel in the least called upon to notice it, and which yet she felt must have some kind of meaning, though what meaning even in her own heart she did not venture to inquire.

But the sowing of hemp-seed was over for the night. No one else would go, not even George Scanmore, who said he had done enough in gathering it. Only one more ceremony remained. At least, it was getting near supper-time, and Katie chose that there should only be one more.

A solitary individual of either sex, carrying a lighted candle, was to repair to a bedroom, and there, in front of a looking-glass to wind his or her hair, the candle being placed in the dressing-glass. While engaged in this process the face of the future spouse would be seen in the looking-glass looking over the shoulder of the woman the matrimonial destiny. Katie went first, and so did several others, but what she saw

"I saw just as if the time" said
 "I saw just as if the time" said
 "I saw just as if the time" said

and sit in this arm-chair by the fire, Jenny, till supper-time. You look so tired, dear."

And Agnes, who had early in life developed a motherliness of character, drew Jenny, very unostentatiously though and without any of the dictatorialness which, however, sat not amiss upon Katie, into the great, comfortable arm-chair, and George Stanmore brought pillows from the sofa and helped Agnes to arrange them comfortably. Jenny was very happy—intensely happy. Surely they were both fond of her. The desire of her heart was to be loved.

"How good, how kind you both are!" she said. Agnes stooped down and kissed her forehead, and George Stanmore whispered,

"Who would not be kind to *you*?"

All this passed while Katie was out of the room, at the hair-combing ceremony.

It was a merry supper. Katie always

shone as a hostess, and, for so young a person, was, besides, a wonderfully clever housekeeper, and consequently had efficient servants. Her roast fowls were hot and done to a turn, the mince collops well-seasoned, the pastry light, and the flavour of the calves' foot jelly (there was no gelatine in those days) left nothing to be wished.

Everybody laughed and talked except Jenny, who sat in silent happiness at the lower end of the table. Mr. Stanmore was at the head, on Katie's right hand, where there was incessant merriment, but Jenny had no wish to join in it; not only because she was somewhat fatigued, but because she wanted to enjoy her own thoughts and feelings.

All outside her seemed vague and misty, more so, as it were, the indistinctly seen background to the intenser life of her own feelings. Yet often in after-life, when

many who sat there then had passed away into the silent land, she saw, in mental vision, almost more distinctly than she saw them now, that hospitable board, the Major's white head and handsome, pompous face at the foot of the table, Katie in green silk skirt and low-cut black velvet bodice (the fashion then) which set off so well the dazzling fairness of her plump neck, and Mr. Stanmore's lively, good-looking head and gentlemanly dress, which was only clerical in a manner as little pronounced as possible, the Tracts for the Times having not yet been published, and M.B. waist-coats and Noah's Ark coats as yet in the womb of time.

But Jenny had quite waked up again, when, having wrapped herself up in her warm tartan-plaid, which had been a present from Mrs. Gordon, and put on her beaver-bonnet—the feminine gender not

aspiring to hats at that period—she found George Stanmore ready great-coated and waiting for her in the hall, or the “lobby,” as it was the fashion to call it at Redshields. It was now a beautiful night for November.

“Let us go through the churchyard, if you don’t mind, Miss Setoun. It won’t make you feel nervous, will it? Say at once, if it will.”

“Oh no! I shall not feel in the least nervous with you.”

Now, had Doctor Gordon been the person accompanying her, Jenny would have said the same thing. But, simply and unconsciously as it was said, George Stanmore took it as a personal compliment.

“Do you know,” he said, in a tenderer tone than he had ever employed before in addressing her, “the reason I wanted to come was because it was here I first saw you. I so often think of that night, and

what you were so good as to tell me about your sufferings. How good you have been to forgive me for frightening you so !”

To this Jenny had nothing to answer at first. The pleasure at the moment was too intense to leave her any ideas. At last she said,

“How should I ever have got back, if it had not been for you?”

As she spoke, she fancied—surely it was not quite fancy?—that he murmured something that sounded like “Dear!” and she was almost certain of a slight pressure—but it might have been an accident—of the hand, which rested on his arm, against his breast. But he only said, after a second’s pause,

“Ah ! never mind that now. I wanted to come to the same place to-night, because I fear it must be our last walk—at least, for a long time.”

Poor little Jenny’s heart seemed to stop

suddenly, as at some awful calamity coming in the midst of almost cloudless joy. Why were they not to walk again? Had she said or done anything she ought not to have said or done? But his next words were a partial relief.

“I kept it to myself all the evening, and, indeed, tried hard to forget it; but Mr. White is coming home next week, and I am going to my own home in Dorsetshire for a month, after which I enter upon my duties in a new curacy my father has found for me.”

Jenny was partly comforted; but there still remained the dreadful prospect of George Stanmore's departure so much sooner than she had expected. Would not the world be without its sunshine when he was gone?

“Now you know,” he continued, “why I

wanted our last walk to be in the same place as the first. But, though we are to be separated, we need not forget one another, need we, Jenny?"

"No," said Jenny, with a deep aspiration.

"You will think of me, then, sometimes? I shall often think of you."

"And I shall often think of you, too," she said, her voice audibly tremulous.

"I wish you would give me some little thing of yours to keep," he asked.

"I am afraid I have nothing here," she answered, thoughtfully, yet nervous and agitated. "I mean nothing I could give you to keep."

"At least you will take this locket of mine, and think of me sometimes when you look at it."

As he spoke, he unfastened a little locket.

from his watch-chain. It was all like a dream, a sweet, sad dream, to Jenny Setoun. Then he continued—

“Do give me something of yours, something that has belonged to you. No matter that it may seem a trifle to you, it will not seem a trifle to me.” And, with trembling fingers, Jenny opened the little grey silk bag which hung over her arm, such as it was the fashion then for ladies to carry, and took out a little purse, made of netted green silk, with steel beads and rings, in which there was nothing but a crooked sixpence, which Agnes Gordon had put in it for luck; and George Stanmore, having kissed it, put it into his pocket.

“I shall never put money in it,” he said, “I prize it too much for that.” And the rest of the way, which was short, for they were now at the further end of the churchyard, they spoke very little. But that

night made upon Jenny an ineffaceable impression. It had been the most agitating night of her life, for the poor child was utterly unpractised in flirtations, and it seemed to her as if upon that night she had passed out of the world of dreaming and thinking into the world of feeling and passion, which she mistook for the world of reality, and yet it was very real to her.

When they stood in the moonlight at the little gate which shut the Brae houses into a sort of privacy, and held one another by both hands, and George would have looked into her eyes, only she had cast them on the ground, Jenny felt it was a solemn as well as an agitating matter.

"Jenny," at last said George Stanmore, for he did at that moment feel more love and even respect for Jenny than he had ever felt for anyone before, and the time and the situation were full of charm,

"may I kiss you this once?—It is farewell!"

Jenny raised her head, her usually pale face now crimson with blushes, and she at least fancied, as their lips met, that "their two souls, like two dew-drops, rushed into one."

As she bade her Aunt Tommie good night, lighting her little candle, and heard that her grandmother had gone to bed, having felt a little more tired than usual, it seemed to her as if all these common-places belonged to some unreal and shadowy world, amidst which she moved as in a vision. The great reality was that moonlight walk, that solemn love-plight, that new wonderful world of mutual feeling and reciprocal thought into which she had that night, as it were, been born.

She sat down at her window, where the

moon shone so bright and sparkling on the broken waters of the Yule, as they rushed over the weir and filled the opening into the fairy glen with a silver haze of light. The night seemed full of a silent passion of beauty like her own heart. All Hallow Eve! If she should live to be as old as "grannie," she should never forget that All Hallow Eve. Would it not send some of its own moonlight sweetness into every future night of her life? To her, in truth, it was a holy night, and with her face still turned to the window, and resting her head between both her hands on the high old-fashioned sill, she prayed fervently that she too might be holy, like that multitude of the blessed whose vigil she had helped so strangely to keep, that she might be meet to dwell in that heaven which to-night had opened to her on earth.

Poor little romantic Jenny ! it never so much as once entered her head that it might be but a Fool's Paradise.

CHAPTER XIII.

LIEUTENANT SETOUN.

JENNY did not see George Stanmore again. The day after the Hallow Eve party she was very tired and had a slight cold, caught probably when she was sowing hemp-seed, and Miss Tommie would not allow her to go out. The next three days, the last of which was Sunday, was wet, and Jenny never went out in wet weather. On Monday morning he was to start, as it would take the greater part of the week to get to Dorsetshire. He was to go to London from Edinburgh by steamer, which abridged the time considerably, as it only took about two

days when the weather was propitious. Jenny sat in vain watching for the lowering clouds to lighten. It continued to pour steadily, not with the violent, gusty passion of July, or with the smiling tears of April, but as if it meant it, and would do it, with the sullen perseverance of November. Perhaps she thought George Stanmore might come to see her, but he never had called on her grandmother and aunt, and she hardly knew if she wished it. In Aunt Tommie's presence it would be so different.

And when after some days the weather improved, and she was able to go to Dr. Gordon's, and there heard he was really gone, just as had been proposed, a chill came over her spirits, like the chill of death, and she answered Mrs. Gordon absently. Agnes walked out to the gate with her, her arm within her friend's, saying—

“Mr. Stanmore left a message for you

when he was here yesterday. I was to say everything that was kind, and he had not called because he was afraid your aunt might think he was taking a liberty, and he said *you* would understand." Agnes looked at Jenny as she spoke, and saw her face flush up and a sudden brightness come into her eye as she answered, nervously—

"Yes—I—I understand."

"Jenny," said Agnes, kindly, "I think Mr. Stanmore likes you better than Katie, after all. Katie is always so conceited."

Jenny made no answer, but she went home very happy, her old opinion more than confirmed that Agnes was the nicest girl in the world. It was but a chill November day, dry overhead, certainly, but the sky all cloud, and the earth all bare fields and sodden leaves, yet no pomp of woods, no blue and rose of heaven, no flowery verdure of earth, could have made

the world and all it contained look more bright to Jenny Setoun than it did that day. The wild, bare uplands, the faint line of the hills, a little darker grey than the sky, the hoarser sound of the waters, the occasional note of the robin perched on some semi-leafless bough. were not to her as they had sometimes been, oppressively sad, but full only of a pathos which seemed but a deeper and sweeter note of happiness.

“What has come to the bairn to make her look so bonnie and bright?” said old Mrs. Tait, as, after the early dinner, Miss Tait having gone “doun the town,” Jenny asked her grandmother if she should bring a book and read to her—“Marmion,” the introduction to the first canto beginning

“November’s sky is chill and drear,
November’s leaf is red and sere.”

“It will suit the day, Jenny honey, and it will suit *me*. But you dinna look like

November. You look as if the May sun were shining on you, my bonnie Jenny."

The May sun of life *was* shining on Jenny at that moment, and continued to shine in her heart, with only occasional gloomy intervals, such as we all have, not only during the dark days of that winter, but of one or two other winters to come. Then came letters from Harry, holding out the hope that he would be home at some not distant day, and enclosing a silhouette likeness of himself—Lieutenant Setoun as he was now. Now the silhouette was, of course, but a dark hint at resemblance compared with the modern photograph, still Jenny and all her friends decided that, as might have been expected from a lieutenant in the navy, Harry was quite a man, and a fine, manly-looking fellow, who would grace the club ball, and might even be in some sort

the successor to Mr. Stanmore, still forgotten, as the hero of the place.

In short, with pleasant retrospections and vague anticipations, it was a happy time in the dreamland which Jenny lived in—lived in rather than in the actual world outside.

Only one thing troubled her much—her want of education. In her own words, she “knew nothing but French,” which she had been mainly taught by Agnes Gordon. This friend had also, at her own desire, and with no little private astonishment, lent her Racine and Corneille, whose tragedies Jenny tried hard into deceiving herself that she admired.

Had it not been that she felt sure that George Stanmore had preferred her in spite even of her ignorance, she would have felt severely mortified. It was so hard to be inferior to Katie and Agnes and the rest of the girls. True, she was conscious occasion-

ally that she knew a great many things that neither Katie nor Agnes knew, more especially Katie; that she had altogether a wider field of vision, and had thoughts on subjects which never so much as came within the scope of their consciousness. But though she took pleasure—nay, her greatest pleasure lay in such thoughts, they had the effect of making her feel singular, and tended to produce a sense of isolation.

For Jenny had read a great deal for her age of a miscellaneous, indeed of an altogether heterogeneous nature. Nothing in the shape of a book came much amiss to her, from the “Mysteries of Udolpho” to Locke on the “Human Understanding,” or a treatise on “Bones and Joints,” which had belonged to old Dr. Tait. She had the run of the Gordons’ library, which was a pretty good one, and now and then Agnes lent her furtively a book from the book

club, which mainly furnished the more aristocratic residents of Redshiels with their intellectual food. But though Jenny really had great interest in "Locke," and did not feel even an account of the arm bones and elbow joint to be altogether dry, she would have preferred, if she could, to have been clever at making bead mats and sealing-wax baskets, and a kind of raised work pricked out upon cardboard with a needle. She also desired intensely to have learned Italian, not exactly for the purpose of speaking Italian, for a single word of any other language than English or Lowland Scotch was never heard at Redshiels, and there were no foreign books to be had. But Italian was considered, and Jenny believed it, to be the very sign and seal of the highest education granted to women, and she had heard of Dante and Tasso, and, if she could only learn Italian, she might

manage somehow to get Dante and Tasso, the perusal of whose writings might possibly give her some amount of the same delight she had already had in reading Shakspeare, which she read aloud in the evenings to her grandmother and aunt, for Miss Tommie liked Shakspeare. "The Bible, Shakspeare, and Burns," she used to say, "and for a novel, Sir Walter. I care little for your common trash of poetry and stories, and your Medoras and Gulnares are so many idiots."

At last Jenny had found an old Italian grammar, and a dog-eared, somewhat mutilated copy of a book of extracts, "Prose Scelte," and, nothing daunted, commenced to teach herself Italian. But to get on without a dictionary was impossible, even to zeal like hers. At last, she found Miss Curll, an old friend of her aunt's, thought she had an Italian dictionary.

Who can describe Jenny's anxiety, as she helped Miss Curll to search through all her repositories for this treasure?—or her disappointment when the search proved in vain? At last Miss Curll fancied she remembered having lent it three or four years before to the schoolmaster of a village about three miles distant, and she kindly offered to go with Jenny to see.

Behold them, Jenny and Miss Curll, setting off on the morning of a dull, mild December day in this search after a dictionary, grannie full of sympathy, and Miss Tommie contemptuous but forbearing.

"It is very kind of you, Kirstie Curll," she said, "to humour the lassie in that way. Much she will ever make of Italian, and much good it would do her if she did, unless she was going to be a governess, but we have not quite come to that yet."

The truth was that Miss Tommie, in her

grim way, was attached to both Jenny and Miss Curll, and in consequence they were permitted, with impunity, to be guilty of many follies which would have been heinous offences in anyone else. It was a very fatiguing walk, for the roads were desperately muddy, and after the first mile there was no footpath. But, in spite of the mud and the gloomy sky, the bare trees, hung with drops from recent rains, and the chill grey atmosphere, Jenny was very happy, till it suddenly struck her that it was, perhaps, very selfish to wish to take the dictionary away from Mr. Baird, and she immediately communicated this qualm of conscience to her companion.

“If he has it at all, he has had it two or three years, and that is surely long enough, in all conscience, to keep anybody’s book.”

So spake Miss Curll, but Jenny still feared she was violating the golden rule.

Her mind was, however, quite set at rest on arriving at the schoolmaster's. He had the dictionary, and returned it at once with some apologies, having, as he said, bought a much larger one at an Edinburgh book-stall some months before.

When the poor man heard why it was wanted he looked at young Jenny with much respect. He was only the son of a "hind," but by his own efforts had had a considerable share of education, and felt for the young girl who wished too to educate herself that freemasonry of sympathy which, in Scotland, breaks through the barriers of class difference so much more readily than in the sister country. He now told Jenny of his own experience, and offered to lend her Tasso's "Gerusalemme," when she was able to read it. As he spoke, he produced an ancient-looking copy, with two loose, torn, scarred boards in calf, considerably

dogs'-eared, the paper brown and old and mildewed. Notwithstanding, the book seemed a treasure to Jenny as well as to the schoolmaster, and she and Mr. Baird parted the best of friends.

All Jenny's leisure time during the next winter was spent in studying Italian, and, by the spring, which was finally fixed for Harry's return, she could have read Tasso, but that pleasure was put by till the winter, when he should be gone again, and she should want something to cheer and occupy her.

The expectation of Harry's return had brought joy to the little house at the Brae. Even Miss Tommie relaxed, and, had it not been for the *arrière-pensée* that there was another mouth, and that, probably, a very hungry one, to feed, she would have shared fully in the general happiness.

Harry arrived a day before he was expected. In the long May twilight, a tall,

manly, broad-shouldered youth, with a sun-burnt face and brave blue eyes, was seen walking up the white road between the ash-trees which led from "the town" to the Brae. He took the path through the churchyard, not hesitatingly, like a stranger, but as if he were used to it, and strode on quickly, his pace becoming ever faster and faster, like one getting ever more eager to reach some goal.

Jenny was beside grannie in the drawing-room, arranging things to look their best for Harry's arrival on the morrow, while Aunt Tommie was watering some pinks in the narrow border by the path which led from the gate to the house.

"I shan't put the fresh flowers till to-morrow, grannie," said Jenny. "They might fade before he came."

"To-morrow!" said grannie, slowly and thoughtfully. "I feel as if I should live

till to-morrow, Jenny; but life seems to hang by something finer than a hair at ninety years of age."

Her placid, benevolent face was turned towards the window as she spoke, and suddenly the absent look in her eyes as of some deep, inward feeling changed to one of attention or listening.

Jenny had not had time to speak, when she heard the lock of the outer gate turned by some decisive hand, then a bang. Her heart beat—she had not heard the gate bang like that for years—then a voice that seemed to have a familiar ring, though octaves lower, and with a tone like command—and an exclamation from Aunt Tommie.

In a moment Jenny was downstairs, and, almost blind with joy, found herself clasped in the strong arms of the sunburnt, seafaring youth.

“Jenny! Jenny!” cried Harry, but Jenny could not speak for delight.

At last she said “Grannie,” and “Dear old grannie!” echoed Harry, and, wringing Aunt Tommie’s hand and kissing her cheek as he passed, he was, in the twinkling of an eye, on the floor by grannie’s arm-chair, with his head on her lap and his hands in both of hers.

The old lady’s eyes were full of tears, and her voice trembled as she said,

“Thank the Lord! I have seen him. One of them has come back. Now I am ready.”

Perhaps there was not a happier household in Great Britain that night than the family at the Brae. Even Miss Tommie hardly thought once of expenses all the evening.

The next morning Harry’s great sea-chest was opened, and his presents displayed.

Among them was an Indian washing silk dress for Miss Tommie, and when about an hour afterwards he took her aside and put two ten-pound notes in her hand, saying, "I only wish I had more for you, Aunt Tommie, considering what a burden and a trouble I must have been to you," something rose in Miss Tommie's throat, and she could hardly articulate—

"It is fair nonsense, Harry; I—I won't take it."

"You must, or I will throw it into the Yule."

"Nay, but Harry, that would be wicked and sinful waste."

A smile was lurking round Harry's lips as he answered—

"You are not ashamed, Aunt Tommie, of the fruits of your bringing up, are you?"

"Ashamed!"

From that moment Harry was Aunt

Tommie's hero, almost her god. Who was so brave, or handsome, or clever, or good? Had she not been rewarded for taking in the orphan and the fatherless? for it was only at times that she had misgivings about her meriting any reward.

But everybody else had nearly the same opinion of Harry Setoun that his aunt had. He was altogether the hero of Redshields, and, when he went to Edinburgh to visit a mess-mate, he was, so report said, the rage even in that fashionable capital.

Harry was much more calculated to be a popular character than his sister Jenny. Added to a tall fine figure, with a look of distinction and command, there was something bright and genial in his presence which won all hearts. He was quite without his sister's sensitive timidity and intense desire to please, always a great drawback.

In truth, and not without reason, he felt secure of pleasing. He knew not a bit more of Latin or Greek than in the old days, and was probably quite as incapable of learning either; but he had not crossed the line or been at the Antipodes for nothing. Few things had escaped his observant eye, more especially in the Kingdom of Nature. Not only had he much to relate of bold adventure and strange customs, with the great merit of modesty, for Harry was never especially the hero of his own stories; but he had brought home valuable collections of plants and birds, and foreign curiosities, more rare than they are now, and it was not merely that he had brought them, but he knew all about them, and they were arranged and classified with rare intelligence and skill. And, when he made a present of these collections to a museum

which Dr. Gordon had been the means of establishing in the place, his popularity knew no bounds.

Lieutenant Setoun was a townsman to be proud of, and would most likely turn out a great man. No one cared to remember that he was not really a townsman at all. Was he not the son of an elder Harry Setoun?—a hero like himself—and was he not the great-grandson of old Dr. Tait?—Dr. Tait of Redshiels, the great physician, who had made the name of their town famous all the country round, on the “English side” as well as the Scotch, and whom all the elder generation could still remember.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ENGAGEMENT.

HARRY, being a hero in the eyes of everybody, was naturally something almost more than a hero in the eyes of the youth of the opposite sex. Even the memory of George Stanmore was eclipsed, and, though now and then scraps of intelligence concerning the latter had reached Redshiels through old Mrs. Dickson of Dicksonside, there seemed little chance of his return; and whose mere memory could stand against the actual presence of Harry Setoun?

At first Harry had been more at Dr.

Gordon's than anywhere else, remembering all the kindness and sympathy he had met with from him in the old days of distress and disgrace at home.

"I used often," he said to Agnes, "when I was far away, long to be where I am now, sitting by your work-table with your mother and yourself, hearing all about the boys, and telling you of the queer places I have been to."

Agnes did not make any answer; but only worked more diligently at the large piece of fine muslin, on which she was laboriously embroidering satin stitch and feather stitch for a collar of a gigantic size, with long ears falling down on the shoulders, such as were then worn; but a close observer might have remarked a slight trembling of her hands, and, had she not held her face so close down over her work, one might have seen how it had suddenly

become rosy-red. Agnes was not absolutely a pretty girl. She had a face kind and sensible, friendly brown eyes, and very smooth, nicely-kept brown hair. There was about her at all times a pleasant tidiness.

For a week or two, Harry seldom passed a morning without looking in at the Gordons, and sitting half an hour with Agnes and her mother, who was in very bad health. These mornings were very pleasant—to Agnes something more than pleasant. Long afterwards, and amidst very different, and even dearer, scenes, she often looked back upon them as the golden age of life, the brief moment that comes to most young hearts, before the world and life have brushed away the bloom from the early fruit, which as yet has not been gathered. They were associated in her mind with open windows, bright

skies dappled with pearly clouds; the scent of a pink hawthorn which lay, like a rosy crown, on a meadow beneath the ha-ha a few yards from the house; and the song of a thrush, whose feathery mate was sitting on her eggs in that very tree.

Agnes was not either a very imaginative or a very romantic girl, but never in all her after-life did she breathe that hawthorn fragrance, or hear the soft note of the thrush, without a piercing thrill of mingled sweetness and pain, which, as the years went on, lost much of the pain, but kept all the sweetness.

About a fortnight after Harry's arrival, his visits began to fall off, first in frequency then in duration, till at last he only called on the Gordons now and then, as he would call on anyone else. At first Agnes had said, cheerfully, to her mother—

“He is beginning now to have so m

engagements," and she continued to say the same, and to look quite calm and placid ; but everybody remarked how thin Agnes Gordon was getting, and both her father and mother looked at her anxiously.

"I met Agnes Gordon to-day," said Miss Tommie, "and she looks very ill, just as if she were going into a decline."

"Agnes Gordon going into a decline!" cried Harry. "I hope not. Good, kind Agnes! She always seems like a second sister. Jenny, will you go with me to call at Dr. Gordon's this afternoon, and then we can see for ourselves how Agnes is?"

"Certainly, Harry, if you cannot go alone."

There was a slight sound of vexation in Jenny's voice—at least, for a moment, Harry fancied it ; but what could she be vexed at?

He answered with his usual bright good-humour.

“I can go alone quite easily, but I supposed you would like to see Agnes yourself. It seems longer than usual since any of us saw her, and I fancied we might all take a walk together.”

Jenny said nothing, but looked pleased and in excellent spirits, and she and Harry set off at the appointed time. But they had only got through the churchyard when they met Katie Rutherford, looking her brightest, and as if she were herself the impersonification of the bright, pleasant day in early summer. Nothing could have been more becoming to her than the fresh muslin dress with its clear white ground and blue pattern, or than the white silk “drawn” bonnet and its full blond border, which sat close round her fair, blooming face. Katie always looked peculiarly well out of doors, and in summer dress. It showed to advantage her fine figure, and her step at

once rapid and stately. Exercise was becoming to her, and gave an added freshness to her bloom without making her either hot or red.

“How fortunate!” she cried out. “I was just on my way to the Brae, Jenny dear, to see if you would come out with me this afternoon for a ramble on the moor; but perhaps you and Harry have some engagement.”

“We were going to pay a visit—” began Jenny, from some reason or other not choosing to tell Katie where she was going; but Harry interrupted her.

“We can pay the visit as we return. It is only to the Gordons. We intended to take a walk, too, and Agnes might not be able to go with us. The old saw runs, you know, ‘A bird in the hand——’”

Harry spoke in his usual pleasant manner, but with a slightly heightened colour, and

finishing by a glance at Katie, a glance which bespoke admiration as plain as a glance could speak. Jenny was about to have said something, but that glance seemed to put her ideas to flight. She suddenly stopped, quite forgetting what she had wished to say. In the meantime, in the most natural manner, Katie had turned towards the moor, and kept talking to Harry with an easy familiarity—a charming manner Harry thought it—blending the freedom of old companionship with the added reticence due to their new position as grown-up persons. Not so Jenny. She could not bear Katie's manner, and accused her in her heart of being vain, false, and selfish. This was all the more ungrateful, on the part of Jenny, that Katie had never before appeared so fond of her. She took more care of her than ever, was most anxious they should not over-fatigue her by

walking too fast, and, when they all sat down to rest, insisted upon her occupying the most comfortable mossy stone to be found cropping out amongst the greenish-brown heather. Jenny did not join in the conversation; she was so absent indeed that she did not at first know what her companions were talking about. But, when at last she became more alive to the world outside her own mind, she found that Katie was professing the most intense interest in botany and ornithology, and only regretting "most deeply" that there was no one at Redshiels to teach the natural sciences.

"How delightful it must be," she cried, with absolute enthusiasm, "to know all about the world round us as you do! I only wonder people can be so clever. Don't you, Jenny dear?"

"I don't think it is so very wonderful. But I am not so fond of natural history as

Harry—at least, I like some other things better.”

“Oh, I am sure there can be nothing so delightful, and then it is all true and real.”

“That is just what I feel,” cried Harry, approvingly. “Poetry and novels are only stories, and even history—historians disagree so much among themselves that it is hard to come at the facts as they really are, and even at last one can never be sure one has come at them; whereas in natural history every step gained is a certainty, or may be made a certainty.”

This seemed incontrovertible, yet Jenny felt that, if she were only older and cleverer, it could not be unanswerable. What, it seemed to her, could there be in the habits of sea-anemones, or even in the destiny of cock-robins, to equal in interest a knowledge of the fate of man? What other

spectacle in creation could be so grand as even the dim and uncertain glimpse which history affords of that mighty procession of humanity through the ages, with its half explanation of man's aspirations and achievements, his hopes and sorrows? But, though Jenny felt this, she could only say—

“Pope says the proper study of mankind is man.”

“Oh, Pope!” cried Katie. “I don't care much for Pope.”

Harry laughed, at once admiring and amused.

“I admire you for saying so. So few people would have had so much moral courage and honesty, and, to confess the truth, though all he says is clever and witty, I like something in poetry that appeals more to the affections. I am afraid it is my want of taste, but I don't care much for any other sort of poetry.”

“Nor I,” cried Katie. “What appeals to the affections, certainly.”

“But the affections are not our only feelings,” said Jenny, struggling to express herself, and succeeding very imperfectly. “When you are walking about here over these moors, do you never think of the old days of the moss-troopers and the fairies—and——”

“Oh, my dear !” Katie interrupted, patronizingly. “Moss-troopers and fairies ! Of course one thinks about one’s ancestors, and has a proper pride in one’s family, and fairy-tales are very well at Halloween, but, as Harry says, what is all that compared with domestic affection ?”

Now Harry had not said this, but he was so well-satisfied that the sentiment should be attributed to him, and so delighted with Katie altogether, that he felt just a little out of humour with his sister, who did not ap-

pear to admire her so much as she ought to have done, that, out of the opposition most of us feel to what seems injustice to the objects of our preference, he devoted himself more than ever to Katie, and, instead of going to call on the Gordons after they had finished their walk, he accompanied Katie home, to show her how to dry some wild plants she had been gathering to form the commencement of a herbarium.

Jenny parted from them at Major Rutherford's door, Katie testifying towards her the greatest affection and good-temper; for, to tell the truth, Jenny seemed a little cross, though she was only vexed and disconcerted, Harry having said, in a tone in which there was a slight accent of displeasure,

"Really, Jenny, I did not know you had anything to do this afternoon."

"How can Harry know what we girls have got to do?" said Katie, coaxingly.

"Good-bye, Jenny dearest. You are quite right to do what you like."

As soon as Jenny got home, she shut herself in her own room, and had a hearty cry. Was Katie going to rob her even of Harry's love? Oh, foolish Jenny!

About a fortnight after this walk to the moor, it became known to the public of Redshiels that Harry Setoun and Katie Rutherford were engaged lovers, though of course they could not be married for a long time. The announcement did not greatly surprise the Redshiels people, though it excited them; for marriages were rare at Redshiels; nor did it in general displease them, for though some shook their heads, and talked about "long engagements," others remarked they would be "a handsome couple," and a few that Katie was "a capital manager," as well as "a bonnie lassie."

The Major gave his consent, observing they "had both come of good families," and then entering into a long genealogical discussion, which Harry listened to with due respect, too happy to be much afflicted by its prosiness.

When Agnes Gordon was told the news, she made no remark. But had her informant (Miss Curl) been thinking of her, and not of Katie, she might have noticed that her face, which had been pale for some weeks, became yet paler, and that her lips moved as if to speak, though no words came. A few minutes afterwards, she was sitting alone in the moss-house in the garden—the moss-house which looked out on a semi-circle of green sward, surrounded by a hedge of white Ayrshire roses surmounted by shrubs, and in the midst of which was a sun-dial. She held her right hand pressed

upon her heart, and her usually sensible, pleasant face was wild with pain.

“Oh !” she thought, “surely the bitterness of death can be nothing compared with *this* bitterness !”

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. TAIT'S ADVICE.

IT seemed to Jenny that Harry was never quite the same after his engagement, to herself at least, that he had been before that event. True, he was as bright, as good-tempered, as ready to oblige and to take care of her as ever; but there was a nameless something which had come between them. They were not united heart and soul, as they had been all their life long up to this period. She felt it keenly, and indulged in many a "good cry" on that account when she was alone. Grannie was so old, and, besides Harry, to whom had she

to look for the love that was to warm her future life?—for, as Aunt Tommie was anxious as to her maintenance in the evil days of old age, so Jenny sometimes thought how sad it would be to be lonely and loveless if—if——when these days should come to her. She was sad at heart, too, about Agnes, and feared sometimes that Harry had been to blame. Had he not been constantly with her at his first coming home? But, though she often went to see Agnes, they rarely, if ever, spoke of Harry, and Agnes only guessed Jenny's sympathy by an added, involuntary tenderness in her manner. It was in those days that the hearts of the two girls grew together with a friendship which is rarely, if ever, formed in later life. Yet they were not like each other in anything except truthfulness of character and tenderness of heart. Agnes had none of the imagination, none of the super-

sensitive impressionableness of Jenny, which, if it opened the way for many fantastic yet very real sorrows, made an escape from those of a more substantial nature which her friend did not possess. Jenny's affection was a great comfort to Agnes at this time, and by degrees she began to feel a little less miserable. To go about her daily employments required less effort. She became used, as it were, to that heavy feeling at her heart, as if it were weighted with lead, to her duties having no charm, and the bright days no brightness. She never spoke of Katie, and seldom saw her.

Nor did Jenny often speak of her, though necessarily they frequently met, when Katie never failed to testify for her the most caressing affection and the most patronizing care. To Katie it always seemed as if Jenny were quite a baby—half a fool she would

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have thought her, had it not been that, in some extraordinary way, Jenny could learn more quickly and do some things a great deal better than Katie herself. How this should be, was a great puzzle to Katie, as the simplicity of higher minds ever will, while the world lasts, be a puzzle to the coarse perceptions of ordinary "clever people." But ever more and more Jenny felt that, with all Katie's show of love, she was setting Harry and herself apart, and her heart was sorely burdened.

One pleasant afternoon in June, as she was sitting on a footstool by old Mrs. Tait, who had fallen asleep while she had been reading aloud "Childe Harold" to her, the sense of Harry's alienation came over her with a bitterer pang than usual, and tears rushed to her eyes as they often did when she thought of it. As she wept, her eyes fell accidentally on the sleeping face of the

old lady, and Jenny was struck by its expression of repose, almost like that of childhood. Longfellow has contrasted—

“The young heart hot and restless,
The old subdued and slow.”

These words had not yet been written, but something like the sentiment they express passed through Jenny's mind, only it was not that grannie's heart was slow, rather she felt as if it were the repose of one who had left so much of Time behind her that the eternal calm of the shore she could now see so near her was reflected in her features.

“Ah!” thought Jenny, “how I wish I could feel as grannie does! She feels everything—love and affection, at least, and prizes it as much as I do; but it does not excite her as it excites me. Oh! why am I so restless? Is it because I am young, and may still have a long time to live? or is it that I have not grannie's sweet temper and

trust in God? How can I ever feel that it will be best for Harry not to care for me as he used to do?" At this terrible idea the tears burst forth again, and they were yet streaming down her face when grannie awoke.

"Jenny, my jewel, what has vexed ye? This is no like my Jenny," and the old lady drew the girl's head down on her lap, and stroked her hair with gentle hands, while foolish Jenny nearly sobbed herself into convulsions. Grannie's kindness was quite too much for her. "Is it onything I can help you with? It will do you good to tell your grief."

After a little more coaxing, Jenny accordingly made a clean breast of it, not, however, without a semi-guilty feeling that it was almost treason to her love for Harry to allow that he could make a mistake, or do anything that fell short of perfection. She

was less tender of Katie. Indeed, without directly saying so, she appeared to imply that Katie was to blame for the whole.

"Oh!" sobbed Jenny, "if Katie had only gone to finish her education in Edinburgh, as she has so often talked about, then he would never have given up going every day to the Gordons, as he did when he first came home! Agnes is so good, grannie, so true!"

The old lady did not answer for some seconds after Jenny paused. There was still the same calmness on her face, which yet not the least intelligent observer could mistake for indifference. Nay, one could see that she was troubled for Jenny, yet when she answered there was something of humour as well as of pathos in her tone.

"My Jenny, you must not expect as you go through life to choose other people's wives, or sweethearts either."

This was a new way of putting it, and instantly Jenny felt, though it had not struck her before, that it could hardly be called an unjust one, yet——

“But, grannie, it is cruel of her to take him away from me. I loved Harry so. I looked forward to his coming home—— And now—Agnes would never have done that.” Again Jenny sobbed bitterly over what she conceived to be the change in Harry.

“But are ye sure, my dear, she does take him away? Harry can see for himsel’ that ye are no sae fond of Katie as ye might be, and he is no pleased. And, Jenny my lamb, she is to be your sister, and ye should try to be fond of her. It will be happier for you. You ken, my bonnie, Katie tries to be very kind to you—in her ain way,” added the old lady.

Jenny listened conscience-stricken, for she

was one of those perhaps not very common persons who are easily induced to believe that anything untoward which happened was their own fault. What! was Harry wounded by her want of sympathy? He should be so no longer. She would, yes, she would even try to love Katie, and to look at her best side, and she had a good side. In her penitence, Jenny hastened to acknowledge this to herself. Katie was a girl equally to live upon, and to make the best of small means, or to grace riches and station. She was a good daughter and a capital manager, and very popular. How could she have been so popular if she had not had some good qualities? Jenny instinctively disbelieved in the success of any mere sham. Thus self-convicted, she began that very day, though timidly at first, to indulge Harry in endless conversations about Katie, and soon the effect was perceptible. Harry was

the most placable of mortals. He began to suppose he must have been mistaken in fancying that Jenny had looked coldly on Katie. No doubt it had only been shyness, and he became almost as fond of her as ever.

Surely old grannie was a witch—a witch of an exceptionally benevolent nature? Jenny was not quite so well-satisfied with the result of her attempts to be fond of Katie. Katie noticed them, and was pleased by them, there was no doubt, but her pleasure had not, to Jenny's perhaps fastidious mind, an altogether satisfactory effect. It seemed, at least, so she imagined, to make her only more patronizing. It gave Jenny the idea that Katie thought her future sister-in-law was endeavouring to propitiate her as a person of consequence, and that she was pleased and flattered by such propitiation, and magnanimously resolved to reward

it by the notice and condescension it sought for.

But at this time, and while Harry was still at Redshiels, an event happened which changed the whole current of the orphans' lives, and that of Katie Rutherford as well. What this event was, I shall, as befits its magnitude, keep for the beginning of a chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHANGES.

DESTINY did not make herself known to the Setouns in any formidable guise. She came, as she often does, only in the shape of a letter. A letter without black edges, or a black seal! a neatly-folded letter with sundry postmarks, and the price marked upon it in brickdust red—such a letter as we find now with the paper yellowed and the ink faded, when, let us hope, with reverent touch, we rifle the depositaries of one departed belonging to a generation of whom only a few now linger in the world which, perhaps, rather than that to which

they have preceded us, is the world of shadows!

This letter was addressed to Miss Thomasina Tait in formal, precise, and gentlemanly characters, and was sealed with a large red seal, impressed with a coat-of-arms. Miss Tommie had once before received a letter which on the outside looked exactly like this, and her eyes opened wide with amazement as Marget, open-mouthed, placed it in her hand. Surprise had rendered even Miss Tommie for the moment agitated and loquacious.

“What can it be, bairns?” she said. “It is—it is Sir John Lavington’s writing.”

“Then, Aunt Tommie,” cried Harry, “it may be anything it likes for what I care. What is Sir John Lavington to us? Where should Jenny and I have been had it depended on Sir John Lavington, and but for grannie and yourself?”

But Miss Tait did not hear this speech, which at another time would have gratified her not a little. She was too deeply engrossed with the letter, and, when she looked up from it, her face was flushed and her manner excited.

“Here’s a fine thing,” she cried, “for Harry and Jenny! Here, Harry! Read that.”

Harry did not take the offered letter, but looked defiance with his candid blue eyes, always the faithful mirror of his feelings.

“Here, Jenny, you take it then and read it out,” she said, in rather a vexed tone, but still excited.

They were just finishing dinner, of which curds and cream had furnished the last course, and Jenny stretched out her hand for the letter with a pale, nervous face and big frightened brown eyes. It was “Edinburgh Weekly Journal” day, and Harry took

up the paper, as if resolved to show that the letter did not in the least concern him. Just at this moment, in walked Katie, looking bright and decided as usual. Harry instantly rose.

“Come, Katie, if you have no objection, we will go for a walk up the glen, while they are reading a letter with which I don’t see that we have anything to do.”

But Katie liked to have to do with most things.

“What letter?” she asked; and, when she had been answered by Miss Tommie, she laid a detaining hand on her impatient lover.

“Go away without hearing Sir John Lavington’s letter! No, indeed! How can you talk such nonsense, Harry?” and, as she spoke, she looked up in his face with a coaxing smile. “Read on, Jenny. I am dying to hear what he says.”

And, with somewhat of a bad grace, but with a lover's look at Katie, Harry sat down again, saying to himself—"A woman's curiosity! but women are always curious, and I like a woman to be a woman." Then Jenny read—

"MADAM,

"I trouble you with these few lines to make some inquiry concerning the children of my niece, the late Mrs. Henry Setoun. They must now be nearly grown up, and have, I trust, turned out well-behaved; and grateful for the care you have bestowed upon them. My motives for not sharing in that care at the time when you did me the honour to write to me on the subject, I have already explained, and probably you will not care to demand from me an explanation why I am now inclined to adopt another course of action. But

Time makes many changes, and let it be sufficient for me to say that I am now willing to provide suitably for these young persons, and to receive them into my family as inmates of my house, provided that, after a trial, the plan shall be found suitable. I should therefore be much obliged if you would co-operate with myself in making arrangements by which they may be sent as soon as possible to Eastwick-Lavington. Begging you will have the goodness to communicate to them the contents of this letter, I am, madam,

“Yours obediently,

“JOHN LAVINGTON.

“P.S.—It will be fairest and best to tell the boy that, though it is my intention to afford him a provision such as would fall to the share of a younger son, there is no prospect of his being heir to the Lavingtons

estates, as these are already differently devised."

There was a moment's silence when Jenny's voice stopped, after faltering through the letter. Harry was the first to speak.

"Hang his provisions! I can provide for myself, and want neither to be an elder son nor a younger son of anybody but the father I am proud of, and whose family are my family. Come along, Katie! What is the use of wasting the whole afternoon?"

But Katie seemed by no means willing to "come." She was flushed, even excited, though she did not lose her self-possession.

"Harry! I think you should not decide in this way. It is a serious matter—is it not, Miss Tait? And" (to Jenny this seemed an after-thought) "one should not

bear malice. It is long ago, and one should forgive."

"You are a dear, good girl, Katie—but——"

"Katie is right," said grannie, who up till this time had been silent, though attentive. "It is a serious matter, and concerns your whole future lives. Bairns, ye maun think of it—at least, till the morn. And, Harry, you and Katie talk it over."

"Neither the one nor the other, mother," said Miss Tommie, a little crestfallen, "would, I hope, be so left to themselves as to refuse such advantages when they are brought to their very door, for no other reason than indulging in revengeful feelings. Katie is the only one that seems to have any sense. We should forgive."

"Katie has not been wounded——" began Jenny, then she stopped, Harry saying quickly,

“Katie feels the same for us as she would for herself. Come along for the walk, Katie.” And this time they went.

Jenny ran up to her own bed-room, where she seated herself on a footstool in the window recess, leaning her head on the sill of the open window. It was her favourite place and attitude in the summer-time, and often had her head lain there dreaming dreams—dreaming such dreams as come to ardent and imaginative youth ; longing at times for a fuller life, to see other places, distant lands, more romantic people, and imagining these dreams fulfilled ! Then she would think of George Stanmore, that avatar of a diviner life, and wonder if her eyes should behold him again, yet nothing doubting in her young foolish heart that he looked at her purse with somewhat of the same feelings that she regarded the locket which, suspended by the narrowest possible

piece of black velvet ribbon, she always wore under her habit-shirt. Would it not have been treason to suppose that George Stanmore could be light-minded or inconstant? Now, that fuller life and more romantic world seemed opening its gates, and inviting her to enter in. What might she not learn and see and become if she were to go to Eastwick-Lavington? Could it be indeed real that it was in her power? Then she suddenly remembered she must leave Redshiels, leave grannie, and in a moment, like the visions of the past which rested on no foundation whatever, this too shrivelled up to nothing, and vanished away.

Leave grannie! Never! Hastily gathering her thoughts and herself up in one simultaneous bodily and mental effort, Jenny ran down to the tiny drawing-room. There sat old Mrs. Tait, the same trim, familiar picture of the olden time that had

for so many years of Jenny's life been an emblem of sympathy and peace. Grannie's face was as unruffled and as benevolent as ever, but Jenny noticed as she entered that there were unshed tears and a far-away look in her eyes, and she heard her say, half aloud to herself, as aged people do sometimes, "All gone, and she is going too, like the rest!" Then Jenny made a little rustling noise, that she might not startle the old lady, and, sitting down on the stool at her feet and laying her head on her lap as on the day she had spoken about Katie, she said, quietly,

"Grannie, I will never leave you—never; never!"

Mrs. Tait laid her hand upon the girl's head, and her lips moved, as she looked upwards; but Jenny fully understood that her promise was accepted, and that her grandmother was blessing her.

The next morning, when Miss Tommie took up her mother's cup of rum and milk, she did not look up as usual with grateful kindness, or say, "Thank you, Tommie dear," which, though quite a stereotyped speech, had never ceased to have the meaning and freshness bestowed by being really felt.

"Mother!" cried Miss Tommie, setting down the tumbler, and in a voice of some alarm; but there was still no answer, and, bending over her and kissing her forehead, Tommie Tait knew that the hour which she had more or less dreaded for twenty years had come at last. Calmly and sweetly as she had lived, had old Mrs. Tait, the last of the Raes of Rae, the last of her generation, passed away.

"Oh, mother! mother!" sobbed Miss Tommie, and, as she fully realized her loss, the poor, lonely-hearted woman lifted up

her voice and wept aloud. Margaret, who was passing the bed-room door, rushed in at the unwonted sound, then called Harry and Jenny, who arrived in breathless haste, half dressed, white-faced and scared.

Jenny threw her arms round Miss Tommie, while Marget held smelling-salts, servants usually appearing to have a general notion that there is nothing so consolatory in affliction as powerful scents. Harry knelt down by the dead, burying his face in his hands and sobbing aloud in his strong young grief. One would almost have said, white and trembling as she looked, that Jenny was the least distressed of the party. Scared, frightened, she could not in a moment realize her personal loss; and she had that diffusive nature which goes out into the griefs of others. At that moment her heart chiefly embraced the grief of Aunt Tommie—and—and—the solemn change to grannie.

Grannie's spirit still lived to Jenny. Was it watching her now? Where was it? It had gone alone. Had she had a moment to long for the sight of a loved face, or the sound of a dear voice? Oh! why had not Jenny been there if she had had such a longing? Had grannie had a pang bodily or mental that she could have spared her? But, no; the dead face was so peaceful she could have had no pang. But it would have been some satisfaction to bid her farewell, and she uttered the wish aloud.

"You wish!" cried Miss Tommie, as it seemed, almost angrily. "Much good wishing will do!" Then she got up and bolted herself into her own room.

"No one will ever love us better than grannie loved us, Jenny," said Harry, with something like a sob.

"Oh! Harry, I am so glad, so glad that I had made up my mind never to leave

grannie. I shall be so thankful for it all my life."

Their mutual sorrow had made Harry and Jenny the same to one another again as they had been in their childhood, for Jenny was certain that, in spite of all Katie's lavishly-bestowed sympathy, Harry felt that only Jenny fully shared this sorrow—a sorrow which had, however, no sting, and in which everybody truly felt for them with a pity which was no offence.

No old Mrs. Tait in Redshiels! It seemed hardly possible. No one living had ever known Redshiels without old Mrs. Tait, and no one could ever remember—though many have led more active, "more useful lives," a few severe-minded persons said—that she had ever done a mean deed, or uttered an unkind word. She had been the counsellor, the confidant, the peacemaker of two or three generations. She was the last relic of

days that were no more, a picture of a past age which it was good to have known. In her after-life, when Redshiels and all that simple early time had become to Jenny Setoun like a shadow picture, often, with a calming influence like autumn sunshine, would come up before the eye of her mind that vision of grannie as she had seen her on the last day of her life, in the little, quaint, shabby, pretty old drawing-room, with its great china bowl, great faded fan, and view of Holyrood in black and white needlework on the wall. The scent of the roses and the pinks came through the open window to-day as yesterday, and the easy-chair stood in its accustomed place.

There, too, was the landscape she loved so well to look upon, spread out in the sunny stillness of the summer afternoon; but grannie was not as usual enjoying it. How well Jenny remembered the far-away

look in her eyes, and wondered if even then she was gazing into the land of Beulah, which was not, to her, "very far off." But it was something far stronger and bitterer added to this that Jenny felt in these "first dark days of nothingness."

"Miss Jenny," said Marget, "are ye no feared to gang by the door where the corp is lying alane wi' only a cannel in yer hand? Gin ye were to see onything!"

"If I were to see grannie, Margaret, I should not be afraid. What could grannie come for but to do me good. I sometimes think, Marget, I would give all I have only once to see her again, and hear her say, 'My bonnie Jenny!'" and a huge burst of grief interrupted the girl; but never again from that day did she feel, in the same degree, that old nameless, superstitious dread which had been one of the miseries of her childhood.

All this time Miss Tommie went about with red eyelids and a severe face. Perhaps not even Jenny was really so much distressed as she was; but it was not Miss Tommie's way either to seek or to give sympathy. She scolded Marget more than usual, affronted the dressmaker, and tried the temper even of Katie Rutherford. But Jenny had an intuitive consciousness of what she was suffering, and, in many inobtrusive ways, of which after a time Miss Tommie was fully aware, tried to comfort her.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

